



Inside: Your 48-page  
guide to life after A-levels

# THE INDEPENDENT

3,065

THURSDAY 15 AUGUST 1996

WEATHER: Cloudy and cool.

40p (B457)

## On your marks: record grades trigger the race for places

JUDITH JUDD  
Education Editor

Universities were last night snapping up students after a record A-level pass-rate.

They had confirmed offers for more than 150,000 of the 290,000 available places, significantly more than at the same time last year.

This means that there may be fewer places in clearing than last year because more students will have made the grade. The A-level pass-rate is up by 1.8 percentage points, one of the biggest increases in the last seven years.

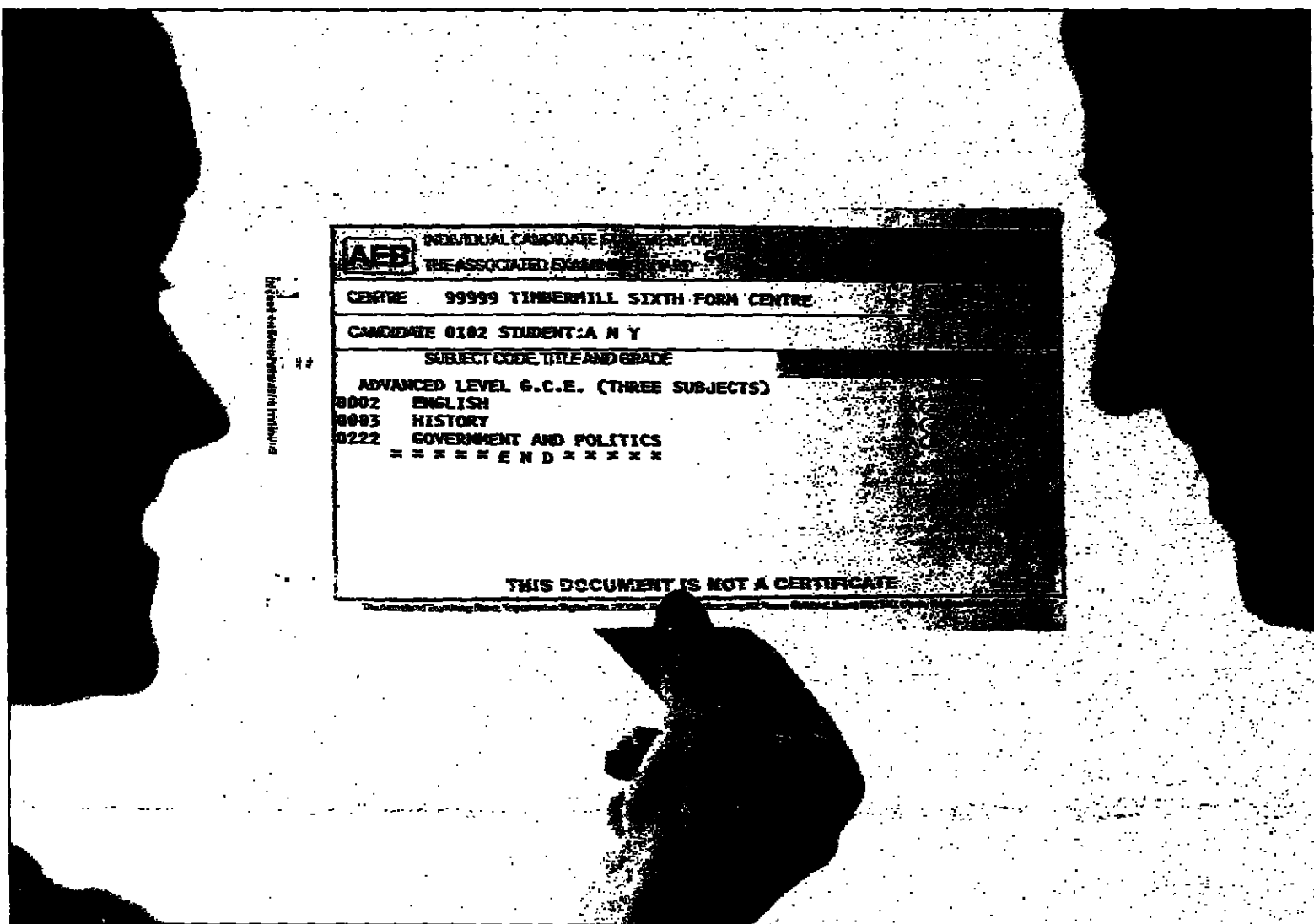
But university admissions officers said students should not panic. Tony Higgins, chief executive of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, said: "If we go on at this rate, there will be fewer places in clearing, but that doesn't mean there will be greater pressure because there will be fewer people chasing them."

Candidates who have just missed their offers may have a better than usual chance of gaining places. Courses which might have gone into clearing, through which spare places are allocated to students who have not got into university, will have fewer places to fill and may decide instead to recruit the next few students down their list.

Universities said there was no danger that the improved pass-rate would mean they overshoot their targets. A spokesman for the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals said: "If you recruit too many people in English, you can always tell the engineers to take fewer."

However that meant there might be fewer places in clearing on the less popular courses, he added.

Universities are under more pressure than usual to recruit students because of government cuts in higher education funding. They stand to lose



Don't panic: Candidates who have just missed the grades asked for by university may have a better chance of gaining a place Photograph: Philip Meech

money if they do not meet their targets.

The annual row over standards erupted yesterday, fuelled by the traditionalists' conviction that the modular exams are easier to pass than those which depend on a final exam.

The pass-rate for modular ex-

ams, a series of tests throughout the course with an exam at the end, was higher than for the traditional exams, though a higher proportion of candidates were awarded A grades in the latter.

However, exam boards emphasised that modular courses motivated students and that

both types of exam were marked according to the same standard. Kathleen Tattersall, convenor of the joint forum for the GCE and GCSE exams, said: "Modular schemes have enabled candidates to exercise choice and to optimise their attainment but it is the quality of work alone which determines

the grade." Lord Henley, the schools minister, defended the exam and congratulated candidates on their hard work. "We're not complacent about standards and are determined that public examinations earn and retain their national currency. We must not fall into the trap of

thinking that if results improve, standards must be at risk." Bryan Davies, a Labour education spokesman, said that "a proper concern for standards should take nothing away from the achievements of students on this important day."

He called for an inquiry into whether we needed five exam

boards and the Liberal Democrats said there should be one united board.

Sir Rhodes Boyson, former Conservative education minister, said the figures showing an improved pass-rate were meaningless. Modular exams, he said, were "like a Caucus race, you start when you like, you stop when you like and everyone gets prizes."

On the improvement in standards, he said: "I am not knocking the children. They do work harder but if the figures are to be believed, the brains of our people are increasing at such an amazing rate that we should be able to invade outer space."

He proposed a new scholarship exam for the top 12 universities, with everyone else taking another exam.

The Association of University Teachers believes that A-levels fail to prepare students for university courses. "Strong anecdotal evidence indicates an increasing mismatch between what A-level students achieve and what is needed for university courses."

But David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said allegations that standards were falling were poppycock.

"Faced with clear evidence of a rise in attainment levels, the prophecies of doom have attempted to attack modular examinations as 'proof' of a decline in standards. But there is no such evidence."

Steve Sinnott, deputy general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: "Students and teachers would appreciate at least one year when their efforts were not undermined by a small, politically motivated group delegitimising their achievements. It is time that this nasty little group stopped and allowed our young people to enjoy their success."

Results tables, page 2  
Leading article, page 13

### Clearing lists start Monday

The Independent and the Independent on Sunday will again this year be the ONLY papers to run all the official Ucas lists of university and college vacancies.

If you have just received your results, and you're looking for a place, then you will need The Independent next Monday (19 August), when the first lists will be published.

As the clearing process continues Ucas will update their vacancies with the latest information they receive from university and college admissions officers. We will publish the updated lists three times a week, through to mid-September - giving you the best possible guide through clearing.

The lists will appear on:  
Monday 19 August  
Wednesday 21 August  
Sunday 25 August  
Tuesday 27 August  
Thursday 29 August  
Sunday 1 September  
Wednesday 4 September  
Sunday 8 September  
Wednesday 11 September

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### Turks shoot Cypriot marcher

TONY BARBER  
Europe Editor

Security forces in Turkish-occupied northern Cyprus shot dead a Greek-Cypriot demonstrator and wounded two British peace-keepers yesterday in one of the worst days of violence since the 1974 Turkish invasion. Costas Similtis, Greece's Prime Minister, denounced the killing as "a criminal act by the occupying forces of Cyprus".

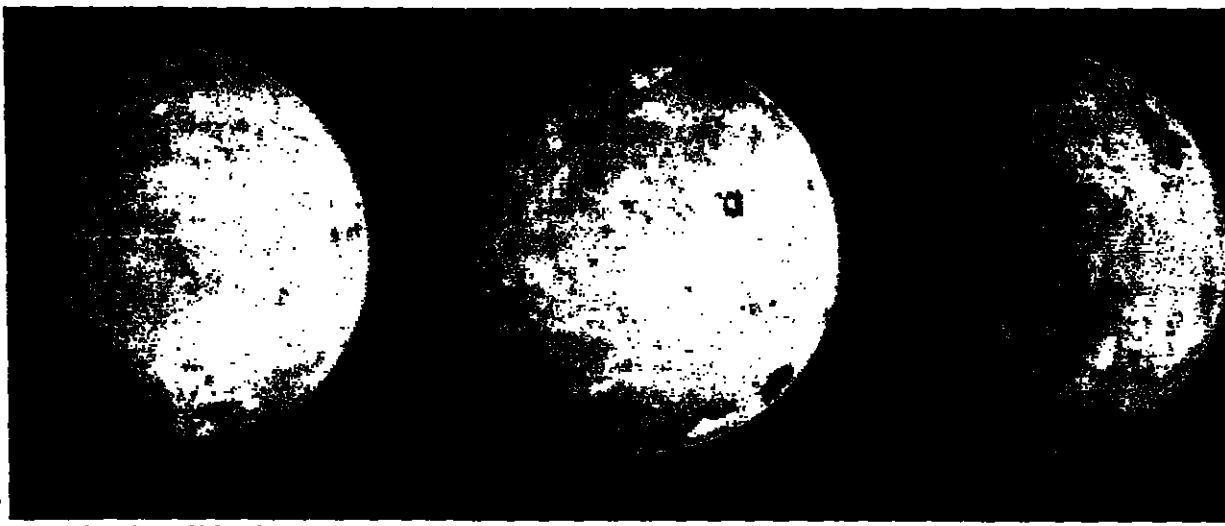
The soldiers, serving with the 39th Regiment Royal Artillery as part of a United Nations force, were said not to be in serious condition.

The violence began when 250 Greek Cypriots stormed into the UN-patrolled zone dividing the Greek-Cypriot south. The demonstrators had attended the nearby funeral in eastern Cyprus of Tasos Isaac, 24, a Greek Cypriot clubbed to death in the buffer zone on Sunday by men in civilian clothes from the Turkish side.

The man killed yesterday was Solomon Solomon, 26, a cousin of Isaac. He was shot in the neck as he tried to haul down a Turkish-Cypriot flag from a sentry post on the edge of the Turkish-Cypriot lines.

The rise in tension has set back efforts to make a fresh start at solving the Cyprus problem. The island has been divided since the Turkish army launched an invasion in July 1974 in response to a Greek-sponsored coup in Nicosia by supporters of Cyprus's union with Greece.

### Scientists divine water by the light of a Jupiter moon



Heavenly sphere: Volcanic eruptions show up on the surface of Io, one of Jupiter's moons Picture sequence: Galileo/Nasa

CHARLES ARTHUR  
Science Editor

Might there be life in yet another part of the solar system? After last week's suggestion that water on Mars could once have played host to early life forms, scientists were yesterday absorbing the news that the frozen crust of Europa - a moon of the planet Jupiter - may hide icy slush or even water, the fundamental ingredient of life.

New images taken by the Galileo spacecraft just 96,000 miles away from Europa show dark spots on its surface which could have been created by geysers.

"It's really exciting," said Ronald Greeley, a geology professor at the Arizona State University. "We're seeing evidence of a lot of geological activity." He described the

surface as resembling "ice floes on polar seas on Earth". Galileo also sent back pictures of a volcano on another of Jupiter's moons, Io, spewing a glowing blue plume of sulphur dioxide 60 miles into space - far further than any Earth volcano.

This also offers evidence that the moons of Jupiter could be geologically active enough to create the conditions in which life could arise.

The presence of slush on Europa - where the surface temperature is estimated to be -145C - would add weight to the argument that the satellite, which is about the same size as the Earth's moon, is not frozen solid, but has water under an icy layer only a few miles thick.

Despite being five times further from the Sun than the Earth, it could have been

warmed by tidal forces that are created as it orbits Jupiter, the largest planet orbiting the Sun.

The more geologically active Europa turns out to be, the more likely it is to have environmental niches that could harbour life, said Pro Greeley.

Scientists hope that better pictures will emerge after December, when Galileo will pass within 370 miles of Europa's surface.

Daniel Goldin, head of the US space agency Nasa, called the images "exciting and compelling" but said he greeted the idea of life on the icy moon with "sceptical optimism". "We're not going to jump the gun," he said. "These pictures do not prove the existence of liquid water on Europa."

But he said "the potential is

an intriguing possibility, and another step in our quest to explore the solar system, the stars, and the answer to the great mystery of whether life exists anywhere else in the cosmos."

The volcanic activity on Io is very different from that on Earth, said Dr Torrence Johnson of Nasa.

"Terrestrial eruptions cannot throw materials to such high altitudes. We believe that on Io we are seeing geyser-like eruptions that are driven by sulphur dioxide or sulphur gas that erupts and freezes in Io's extremely tenuous atmosphere," he said.



### QUICKLY

**Little wonder**  
A senior psychologist claims today's children are more likely to spend their early years glued to computer games than roaming around outdoors with friends, and are being robbed of a "sense of wonder". Page 3

**Vicar remembered**  
Schoolchildren laid flowers and pictures at the spot where the Rev Christopher Gray, 32, was stabbed to death beside his church in Liverpool, while his parents remembered their son's courageous disregard for the risks facing clergy. Page 4

**Gunman gets life**  
The law on firearms was again shown to be fatally flawed, when a man without a gun licence who was able to buy two pistols which he used to murder one woman and shoot three others, was given four life sentences at the Old Bailey. Page 5

**Liffe trader fined**  
A top trader on the London International Financial Futures Exchange has been fined for using "foul, abusive and embarrassing" language against a member of staff. He was previously fined for the racial abuse of a black trader. Page 16

**TWA crash theory**  
US investigators believe two separate explosions doomed TWA Flight 800 on 17 July, killing all 230 passengers and are searching for a "fingerprint" to determine whether the first blast was caused by a bomb in the passenger cabin. Page 11

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# Labour cracks the whip on MPs



Nick Brown: Offers toll

ANTHONY BEVINS  
Political Editor

In a dramatic crack of the whip, Labour MPs were warned last night that if Tony Blair becomes Prime Minister, they will be expected to work longer and harder at Westminster, for the government line in all votes and end the sniping and backbiting.

Nick Brown, Deputy Chief Whip, said in an interview with the *Independent* that loyalty and unity would be the basic requirement – and every Labour MP would be elected on that basis. Laying down a law that will discipline his more cantankerous colleagues, he said: "The election is fought by national political parties and the role of the individual, although important, is subservient to the role of the

party." On that basis it would be the duty of MPs to sustain their government – and that meant a day-to-day requirement to maintain enough numbers in the Commons to fend off ambushes by the Tory opposition.

At the moment, he said, there was a tendency for Labour MPs to go back to their constituencies on Thursdays, so they would be in place for their "constituency Fridays". Departures on Thursdays could be at risk if a Labour government majority was threatened by Tory guerrilla tactics.

"It would be a grotesque betrayal of everybody that has not only worked so hard, but also pulled back their differences and personal views in order to make the victory so necessary for a Labour victory, if we botched it up by taking an evening off, or

by being slack," Mr Brown said. Although he was reluctant to dwell on sanctions that might be taken against rebels – or slackers – Mr Brown was scathingly outspoken about Labour MPs who leaked embarrassing material, and leadership sources who abused their position by attacking frontbench colleagues on a non-attributable basis.

Citing an example, he said that if he could prove who had taped a recent confidential backbench meeting with Mr Blair, then leaking verbatim quotes to a malign Tory tabloid newspaper, he would do all in his power to have the culprit expelled from the Parliamentary Labour Party and from the party itself, ensuring the loss of his or her Commons seat.

"They would risk expulsion from whatever I could get them

expelled from," Mr Brown said. But he was at pains also to insist that the whips would be even-handed. They would be just as robust with unidentified "leadership sources" who briefed against colleagues.

In an evident reference to the fate of Clare Short, he said: "Imagine how demoralising it must be for members of the Shadow Cabinet, doing a perfectly good job, who, commanding the support of their parliamentary colleagues, read that they are out of favour with the leadership, or believed to have botched this up, or not to have done that well."

"Imagine how destructive that is of the essential unity of the party, which is an absolute prerequisite in sustaining a Labour government, and yet it is said to be the leadership view."



Clare Short: Wins sympathy

## New-style exams reduce chances of top grade



Success in store: Marked A-level papers at the University of Surrey. Photograph: Philip Meech

JUDITH JUDD  
Education Editor

Examination candidates' chances of getting A grades at A-level appear to be less if they take new modular courses than if they take a single final exam, according to the exam results published yesterday.

Figures released by the exam boards show that in Biology, Physics and Chemistry a higher percentage of those taking traditional exams gained A grades. Only in Maths was the proportion of A grades higher in the new courses.

In Chemistry and Physics, there was also a slightly higher percentage of students getting B grades.

However, figures for the four

subjects show that the overall pass-rate is higher for modular courses, in which pupils sit a series of tests throughout their two-year course plus a final exam.

Earlier research from Newcastle University suggested that modular exams helped students to secure a grade higher than they would have done in a conventional exam.

Yesterday exam boards were at pains to emphasise that there was no difference in standard between the two types of examination.

More than half the candidates took modular courses in Maths and Chemistry, about half in Biology and just under half in Physics.

Some English courses are

also modular and these exams are due to be taken over the next two years in a growing number of subjects.

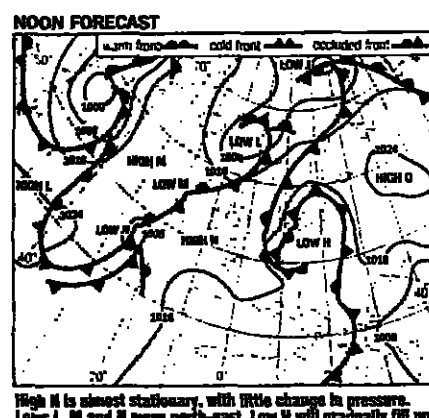
The proportion of A grades rose less than in previous years. It went up by 0.4 per cent to 16 per cent compared with 0.8 per cent last year and 0.9 per cent the year before.

Entries for Physics and Chemistry continued to decline, but those for Maths showed a rise.

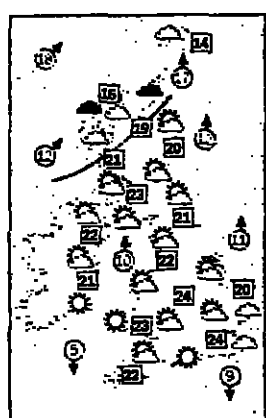
Subjects with higher entries included General Studies, Business Studies, Psychology and Computing. In Economics and Classics the entry continued to fall.

Overall, the number of entries increased by a total of 1.2 per cent.

### Weather forecast



High 11 is almost stationary, with little change in pressure. Low 1, 11 and 11 move north-east, Low 11 will gradually fill up.



**TODAY'S FORECAST:** Cloudy and damp in northern Scotland with occasional rain and a brisk wind, although drier and milder in the south. Central and southern Scotland, and Ireland will have a bright and sunny day. The rest of the country will be mainly sunny with a few clouds. The wind will be light and variable. The temperature will be in the 10s and 20s.

**OUTLOOK FOR THE NEXT TWO DAYS:** Tomorrow will be cool in northern Scotland with a few light showers. Southern Scotland, Ireland and the rest of the country will be mainly sunny with a few clouds. The wind will be light and variable. The temperature will be in the 10s and 20s.

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Cloud
London	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Birmingham	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Manchester	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Edinburgh	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Belfast	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Cardiff	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Exeter	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Gloucester	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Leeds	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Liverpool	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Newcastle	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Nottingham	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Sheffield	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Southampton	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Stoke-on-Trent	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Swansea	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Torquay	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Wolverhampton	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Wrexham	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
York	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Cloud
London	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
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Liverpool	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Newcastle	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
Nottingham	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
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Wrexham	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy
York	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy	12-18	10-15	Partly cloudy

A LEVEL RESULTS — JUNE 1996									
% of candidates gaining grade (not shown in brackets)									
Subject	A	B	C	D	E	N	U	sat	no. sat
Art/Design subjects	34 (38)	34 (38)	34 (38)	34 (38)	34 (38)	34 (38)	34 (38)	34 (38)	34 (38)
Biology	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Business Studies	77 (79)	21 (22)	44 (45)	55 (56)	22 (23)	31 (32)	31 (32)	23 (24)	23 (24)
Chemistry	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Classical subjects	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)
Communication Studies	11 (12)	27 (28)	42 (43)	57 (58)	77 (78)	88 (89)	99 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
Computing	11 (12)	27 (28)	42 (43)	57 (58)	77 (78)	88 (89)	99 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
Economics	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
English	45 (49)	39 (42)	35 (37)	26 (28)	10 (11)	3 (3)	3 (3)	3 (3)	3 (3)
Expressive arts	11 (12)	27 (28)	42 (43)	57 (58)	77 (78)	88 (89)	99 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
French	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)
General Studies	40 (44)	30 (33)	28 (30)	28 (30)	28 (30)	28 (30)	28 (30)	28 (30)	28 (30)
Geography	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
German	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)	26 (28)
History	45 (49)	39 (42)	35 (37)	26 (28)	10 (11)	3 (3)	3 (3)	3 (3)	3 (3)
Home Economics	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Law	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Mathematics	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Media/Art Studies	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Music	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Other modern languages	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Physics	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Political Studies	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Psychology	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Religious Studies	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Science	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Sociology	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Spanish	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Sport/PE Studies	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Technology subjects	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Welsh	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
All other subjects	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)
Total	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)	31 (35)

## Postal dispute takes strike rate to highest for 6 years

STEVE BOGGAN

A fifth one-day strike by postal workers yesterday brought mail deliveries to a standstill as new figures showed a huge increase in the number of working days lost in Britain to industrial action. The dispute has contributed to figures which show 228,000 days were lost in June, the highest monthly figure since March 1990.

Despite appearing to be no more than a hair's breadth from agreement, both sides in the postal dispute stood their ground, with management claiming that more employees turned up for work than during the last one-day strike, and the union claiming it had a stranglehold on deliveries.

The Communication Workers' Union and management have agreed on seven elements of an eight-point deal after lengthy negotiations at Acas. But the union's executive refuses to agree to management plans to introduce "teamworking", in which groups of workers take more responsibility for deliveries in specified areas.

A spokesman for the union said the teamworking propos-

als were vague and untested. However, he added: "We do agree that change is needed, but we want to get back to the table and talk about it. We believe teamworking has real flaws, which will result in more responsibility and stress for people who, in some cases, are already working a six-day week for a basic wage of less than £10,000 a year."

Ironically, the Royal Mail appeared to agree. A spokeswoman said: "The agreement at Acas recognised that both sides needed to talk further about this. We don't have any hard and fast ideas about teamworking other than it will result in more flexibility and will give employees more control over what they do. We would like to talk further about it so we can get it right."

The Royal Mail claimed more than 18,000 people turned up for work by the end of the day shift. A spokesman said: "This demonstrates a drift back to work and a weakening of the industrial action."

It said two of its mechanised letter offices (MLOs), in Cambridge and Darlington, and a regional distribution centre, in

the East Midlands, were working. The union countered that a greater number of MLOs – 82 – were at a standstill.

"There is no point them going on about how many people turned up for work," said a union spokesman. "We don't accept their figures, but even if we did, all it means is that they are paying people to do nothing because there are no mail deliveries."

The union has gained pay rises for its members of between 5 and 15 per cent. But unless agreement over teamworking can be reached, it said one-day strikes would go ahead on 22 and 30 August and on 2 September. The postal dispute is one of several which pushed the number of lost working days to the highest level since 1990. Disputes on London Underground and at the Benefits Agency contributed to the lost days.

Only 278,000 days were lost to industrial action in the whole of 1994, the lowest number since records began. However, the latest figures amount to only a fraction of the unrest in 1979, before Margaret Thatcher came to power, when 29.5 million days were lost.

## SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

A new register is to be set up to stop "cowboy" operators with criminal records working as security guards, the Government proposed yesterday. An independent agency is to be established to vet the estimated 49,000 private guards currently employed in this country.

The plan follows evidence that criminals are operating in the unregulated and booming security industry. Two new offences of employing an unlicensed guard and working without a licence or proper clearance were also proposed by the Home Office. Chief Superintendent Brian Mackenzie, President of the Police Superintendents' Association, said: "We have long complained about the number of people with criminal records working in the security industry. Such people create a false sense of security and should be banned from such employment." Jason Bennett

The Advertising Standards Authority is looking into complaints about the Conservatives' "demon" advertisement using an image of Tony Blair. The industry watchdog had received "about half a dozen inquiries" from members of the public who felt the advert was offensive. ASA Director of Communications Caroline Crawford said.

The ASA will be considering if the poster breaches the British Code of Advertising and Sales Promotion which covers protection of privacy. Advertisers must obtain permission from people in the public eye, such as politicians, if they are to be portrayed in an advert in an "offensive or adverse" way. It will be up to the Tories' advertising agency M&C Saatchi, who devised the poster, to demonstrate that they have kept within the Code. If it finds that there has been a breach, the authority can effectively order the poster to be withdrawn.

Oil giant Shell has revealed plans from 19 large engineering and offshore consortia to dispose of its controversial Brent Spar platform. A Dutch group proposes to turn the 400ft, floating oil storage buoy – now moored in a Norwegian fjord – into an "eco-friendly" floating power station with three large windmills on top and wave power devices below.

From Belgium comes a plan to dig a trench 100ft deep on the seabed and bury the Brent Spar, while another Dutch proposal envisages turning it into gigantic tanks for an oil refinery. Most proposals are for various ways of bringing the Spar to shore and breaking it up for scrap. Shell will choose a shortlist around the end of the year. Nicholas Schoon

Scientists have discovered an "eat-all-you-want" gene – for mice, at least. By disabling a gene called RIIIB, they produced mice which stayed lean despite being fed a high-fat diet, and were also protected against liver damage. The new research, published today in the science journal *Nature*, could lead to anti-obesity drugs for humans.

The gene which the scientists knocked out is one of four that encode an enzyme called PKA, known to be involved in regulating metabolic rate. Researchers from the University of Washington, Seattle, concluded: "RIIB could also provide a target for anti-obesity drugs." Charles Arthur

Politically correct language has come under attack in the new edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Its "Better English Guide" section says the over-zealous use of PC terms can cause confusion and embarrassment.

The guide states that it seems reasonable to substitute "flight attendant" for "stewardess" and "chairperson" for "chairman" to avoid sexism. But it adds that to try to change words such as "manhandle" or "manhole" is ridiculous. It continues: "Extreme proposals, such as substituting herstory for history, have no place outside specifically feminist writing." The *Pocket Oxford Dictionary* has sold more than 3 million copies since it was first published in 1924.

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## news

**Murdered cleric:** Shock caused by killing of a priest outside his church underlines the physical danger facing inner-city clergy



Sacrificed life: Parents of Rev Christopher Gray recalling the immense courage of their son (right) who was stabbed to death Photograph: AP

## Courage of the vicar who could never say no

REBECCA FOWLER

As tearful schoolchildren laid flowers and pictures at the spot where the Rev Christopher Gray, 32, was brutally stabbed to death, beside his modern brick church in Liverpool, his parents yesterday recalled their son's courageous disregard for the growing risks facing clergy in Britain.

Dr Philip Gray, 63, a retired GP from Portsmouth, described how his son, a brilliant scholar with a great future in the Church, had no other ambition than to work among the most socially deprived.

He said: "It was a measure of his character that he chose to shelter us from full knowledge of the risks he was taking ... there was nothing we could do to lessen it any way. He'd chosen to accept those risks and we had to accept his decision."

Mr Gray, who was ordained in Liverpool three years ago, was stabbed through the heart early on Tuesday outside his home when he returned to St Margaret's vicarage in Anfield shortly after midnight.

The police are holding Terence Storey, aged 31. Mr Gray had been helping him since he was recently released from Walton Prison.

For the Church of England, nothing could more tragically sum up the increasing pressure on clergy than the death of Mr Gray, who was among the most promising priests of his generation. He was a "rising star" who combined scholarship with a simple love of people.

Dr Gray said: "He was different things to different people. To the parishioners and friends of St Margaret's he was a well loved priest ... to the

Marian Blackburn, 15, who went on a youth trip to the Czech republic with Mr Gray last year, said: "He wanted the best for everybody, he loved everybody. You could tell, just from the way he talked to people, even if he didn't know them at all. We just couldn't believe what's happened."

Mr Gray's death has also been received with shock by the clergy. Many sense they have become more vulnerable in recent years, while struggling to maintain an open-door policy to those in need. Yet many priests, like Mr Gray, remain determined to work among the most socially deprived and challenged communities.

The Rev David Gavin, 33, moved to St Cleopas Church, in Toxteth, a year ago, with his wife and son. He said: "I'm really enjoying life here. The amount of life you hit face-on makes it very interesting. Like Chris, I came from a fairly well-off background and maybe that drew me into the inner cities."

But he added: "Although I hope this case is an horrendous one-off, it is true that there's been an increase in violence, and that there's a sense clergy are no longer people you'd never have a go at."

Mr Gavin's family has felt vulnerable on occasions, and his wife has become reluctant to invite visitors in to wait for her husband in the evenings when he is not at home.

Mr Gavin said: "There's been a change in the way clergy are trained. We're taught to be a bit more aware of potential problems - drugs, and people making accusations against you."

"But you're in a job where, ultimately, you are trying to meet people's needs. Sometimes you have to bend the rules, and that will always make you vulnerable."

The Rev David Lewis, 48, dean of North Liverpool, where Mr Gray was a priest, described how he experienced violence spilling over into clerical life.

He said: "Society has changed and things we would once have done without thinking about them, we are now more nervous of. We are making judgments all the time on whether it's safe to open the door to someone late at night."

Mr Lewis was threatened once by a man in his study demanding money for a train fare to Scotland. Another visitor leaned on his doorbell for an hour, demanding money.

He said: "At the end of the day it's about your own survival and I suppose the remarkable thing about Chris is that for him, at the end, it wasn't."

Obituary, page 12

'At the end of the day it's about your own survival, but for Chris, at the end, it wasn't'

academic community he was a scholar of high repute with a First Class honours degree in Classics from Oxford and two post-graduate degrees, one in philosophy, one in theology."

He added: "In spite of his academic ability he never lost his common touch with people from all walks of life. Anyone could talk to him as a friend ... Chris had no ambition in the Church, and was willing to go where he was sent and do what he was asked to do."

The news of Mr Gray's death was broken to his parents while they were on a walking holiday in Northumbria. His mother, Dr Margaret Gray, 64, also a retired GP, said yesterday: "He was an extraordinary son, and I adored him."

It also emerged yesterday that Mr Gray had been held hostage at knifepoint two years ago, while he was working in another Merseyside parish.

At St Margaret's there was a constant flow of children and their parents laying tributes with simple notes, which included: "We will miss you so very much", and a simple drawing in felt-tip pen of a smiling priest.

## The Christian soldier confronts a violent world

The clergy of the Church of England have traditionally relied on courage and innocence to protect them against the dangerous world in which they work. But now they are asking if a new professionalism is in order in the wake of murder of the Rev Chris Gray and the hatchet attack in Walsall on the Rev Nduna Mpumzi. He is to have brain surgery.

The diocese of Lichfield, in which Mr Mpumzi serves, has organised a one-day conference on clergy safety in November. But a spokesman said that this was not prompted by any general anxiety: it followed on from conferences about church security. The theft costs the Church of England around £6m a year. The diocese of Lichfield, which recorded 19 incidents of theft or vandalism in 1990, now has more than 300 a year.

Many churches, even in rural areas, are now closed except for services. "I have just opened my church after 16 years in which it was locked except at services," a vicar in London said. "We can only do this because we have a rota of volunteers from the parish watching for theft or arson. But their average age is 70, so I do worry. After these attacks, I am not sure it is safe for them."

The diocese of London earlier this year advised priests to consider abandoning their traditional policy of welcoming almost everyone who comes to their door. Yet this will not stop

**Andrew Brown** on the clergy's stance in the face of rising attacks

the wretched and homeless coming. They know, as the priests do, that a professional Christian cannot easily turn away someone whom the rest of the world has rejected.

The Rev Rob Marshall, priest in charge of St Augustine's, Queensgate, west London, said that last week he was woken twice after midnight by homeless men wanting shelter in the vicarage, one just out of a mental hospital. Both he refused, partly because he was worried for his children, asleep in the vicarage.

The Rev Adrian Benjamin, rector of All Saints in Friern Barnet, north London, said: "I don't know what you do with somebody at midnight in your vicarage. In this job you do keep odd hours and meet all sorts of people. They do get very cross when you turn them away. You say, 'I'm sorry, no money' and they go back up the drive hurling abuse - but not knives."

Fr Benjamin, like most of the priests the *Independent* talked to, made the point that the clergy are often the only middle-class people living in areas of considerable deprivation, which can make them the focus of considerable hostility.

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news

## Porkers in the shower bring home the bacon

CHARLIE BAIN

The perfect present is here for the pig who has everything: the snout-operated en-suite shower. The Pig Cooler is being offered to British farmers to keep hot and bothered pigs in the pink. Warm weather is anathema to pigs. It reduces the sperm count in boars, causes stress to sows and makes all pigs feel unlike pigging out. Keeping our porcine friends cool is essential for farmers; it not only makes for a better-tasting kind of pig, but a nicer tasting one too.

fact that pigs can't sweat and have to rely on respiration and evaporation to lose heat.

An unhappy pig, which won't breed or eat the optimum amount of food that is required for it to grow, can be a major financial setback for the farmer.

Research carried out by manufacturers Quality Equipment showed that less than 15 per cent of pig farmers have a dedicated water-cooling system, and those who do rely on a "centralised" pipe-work system that creates a mist of water, often increasing humidity levels in indoor pens.

Many existing systems operate on a timer, spraying the pig in water when they may not want to cool down, which can irritate them further," said Mr Harding. "However, this device gives the pig control over their own environment."

Suffolk farmer Philip Greenacre, for one, is delighted. "After all, a happy pig at the end of the day is going to make me more money."



And pigs might dry: One of farmer Philip Greenacre's lot tests out the new Pig Cooler Photograph: Jason Mitchell

## Milk from cows fed on bracken 'carcinogenic'

CHARLES ARTHUR  
Science Editor

Cows that eat bracken produce milk containing a potent carcinogen absorbed from the plant, according to new scientific research.

The carcinogen, ptaquiloside, would not be destroyed by pasteurisation, according to one expert. It is well known for its ability to cause tumours by damage to DNA, the basic genetic material of all cells. Now a team of scientists in New Zealand and Venezuela has discovered that almost 10 per cent of the chemical eaten by cows is passed on in milk, a fact the team calls a "cause for concern".

The team suggests that ptaquiloside in milk is "certainly likely" to be responsible for the level of stomach cancer found in farmers in Costa Rica and other Central American countries, where bracken is particularly dense.

Though cows in the UK do not normally eat bracken, they may do if there is a drought, if fields have been overgrazed, or if they wander into thickets. The National Farmers' Union said:

"Cows don't like to eat bracken, and farmers don't encourage its growth. Even in winter cows would be fed from winter stocks." But Alan Heyworth of the Bracken Advisory Commission said: "If the animals are in a field which has some fronds, it's obviously going to happen that they'll eat some."

The new research, published today in *Nature*, investigated the effects of feeding bracken to cows and discovered that ptaquiloside is still excreted in milk almost four days after feeding stops. Pasteurisation would be unlikely to affect the chemical, said Mr Heyworth: "If it survives getting through the cow's digestive system and blood, I don't think heat treatment would have any effect."

In the UK, the plant covers a total area equivalent to the size of Yorkshire. It is poisonous to animals which eat it, and its spores can be carcinogenic when fed to mice and guinea pigs. Although efforts are being made to destroy it using pesticides, European Union rules prevent spraying near water-courses - which can also be polluted by the plant.

## Mail-order murderer mocks gun law

JASON BENNETTO  
Crime Correspondent

The country's gun laws were again shown to be fatally flawed yesterday after it emerged that a man without a gun licence was able to buy two pistols, through a magazine, which he used to murder one woman and shoot three others.

A judge at the Old Bailey called for tighter restrictions on the sale of guns as he sentenced Richard Humphrey to four life sentences at the close of a case which has provided further ammunition for the anti-gun lobby.

Sir Lawrence Verney, the Recorder of London, described the case with which Humphrey bought the weapons from *Gun Mart* magazine as "deplorable".



The ease with which Humphrey bought his guns from a magazine was 'deplorable'

The dealer became suspicious and tipped off the police, but when they arrived at Humphrey's address in Herne Hill, south London, they found an empty box, some of the ammunition, but no sign of the guns, or of Humphrey.

Police have since put their own advertisement in the magazine - warning dealers and enthusiasts to be on the alert.

Joanna Korner QC, prosecuting, told the jury: "This case has provided the clearest possible demonstration of the ease with which it is possible for criminals to acquire firearms certificates and, indeed, firearms."

Victoria Oduisi, 36, wife of a Nigerian airline official, was executed in cold blood by Humphrey as she returned from church. She was found by her brother, living near her home in Stockwell, south London.

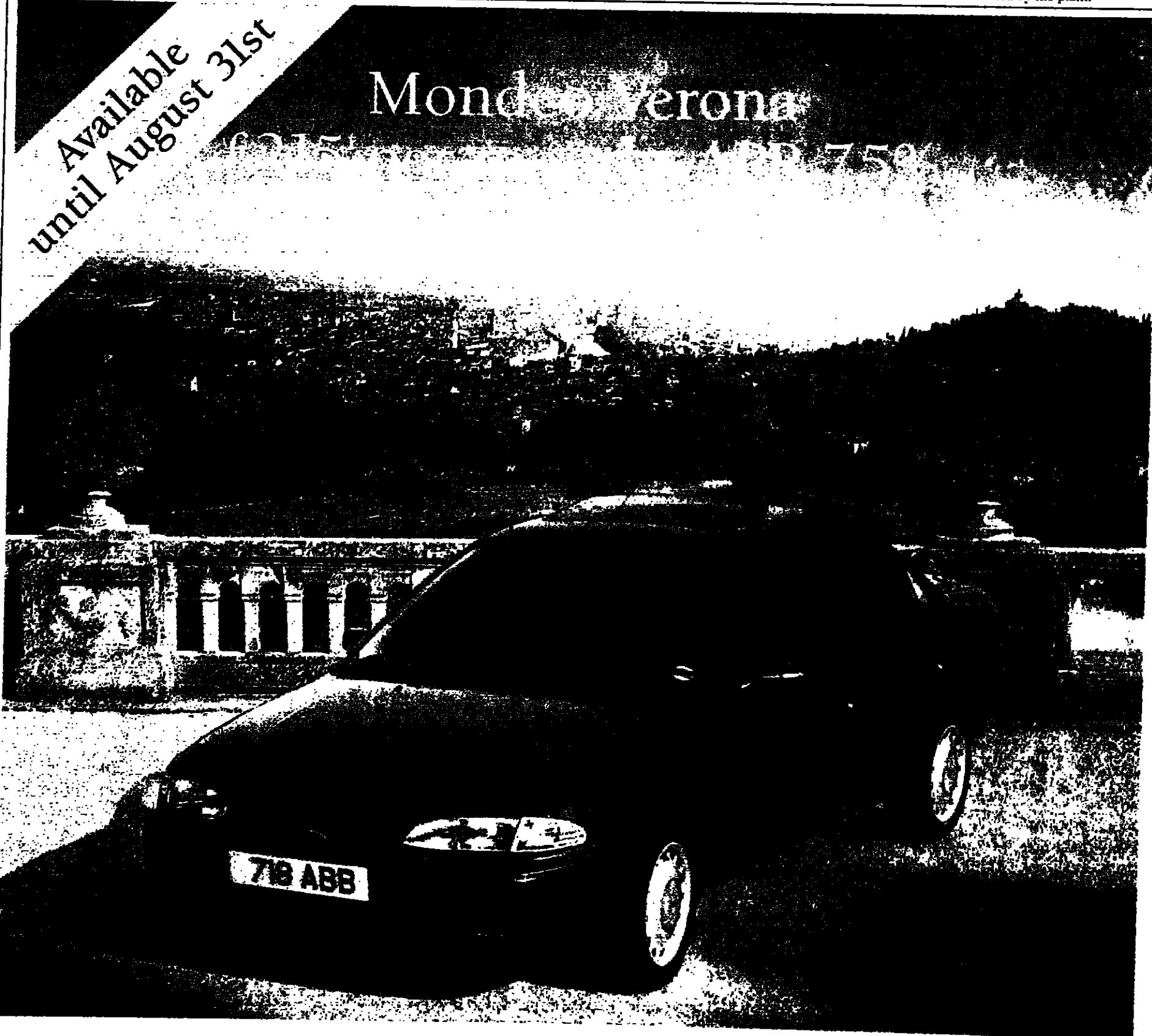
"It was a wanton and cruel killing, causing immense grief to a number of people," said the judge. He added it was fortunate that Humphrey was not facing a second murder charge after shooting down Wing Commander Peter Drissell in May last year. Humphrey and another man, Paul Ammah, had tried to mug the wing commander as he returned to his Clapham home from the Ministry of Defence. The RAF officer "miraculously survived" a hail of at least five bullets, four of which remain in his body.

Humphrey also tried to kill a passer-by, Carol Bell, who witnessed the mugging and threatened to call the police. She escaped injury. During a row with a man on the London Underground, Humphrey fired at the man's head. But Michael Perry, 23, put up his hand and the shot went into his forearm.

Humphrey earlier fired on another man whom he mugged in Stockwell. The shot was aimed at 20-year-old Mark Rogers' foot, but missed. Humphrey was also convicted of two robberies and firearms offences and was jailed for nine years on these, to run concurrently. He denied all charges.

Humphrey called the jury of seven men and five women "senseless, racist bastards" after they convicted him. As Humphrey was convicted, the Police Federation renewed its call for a ban on handguns. "This case exposes the weakness of the system," said its chairman, Fred Broughton. Instead of tinkering with the law, "a whole-sale prohibition of handguns is the correct solution," he added.

Humphrey's own counsel joined the prosecution's concern over existing firearms laws. Alan Newman QC, said: "I accept he must be punished for the dreadful crimes he has committed, but he must not be made a scapegoat for the failure of society to regulate its affairs by making it much harder for people like Humphrey to obtain guns."



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## Inner-city clergy of the could no

Marian Blackburn, 15, who went on a youth trip to the Czech republic with Mr Gray last year, said: "He wanted to be a priest for everybody. You could tell from the way he talked to people, even if he didn't know them at all. We just couldn't believe what he was saying."

Mr Gray's death has been received with shock by the clergy. Many sense they have become more vulnerable in recent years, while struggling to maintain an open-door policy to those in need. Yet many priests, like Mr Gray, remain determined to work among the socially deprived and disadvantaged communities.

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But he added: "Although hope this case is an isolated one-off, it is true that there has been an increase in violence, and that there's a sense that we are no longer people who never have a go at."

Mr Gavin's family has been harassed on occasions, and his wife has become reluctant to visit visitors in her home, as he is not at home.

Mr Gavin said: "There's a change in the way clergy are treated. We're taught to be more aware of potential problems - drugs, and people using accusations against us."

But when it comes to the ultimate, you are going to meet people's needs. Sometimes you have to break the rules, and that's what makes you vulnerable."

The Rev David Lewis, 42, dean of North, said: "Mr Gray was a priest who knew how he expected to live, and he was a man who was not afraid of the consequences of his actions. He was a man who was not afraid of the consequences of his actions. He was a man who was not afraid of the consequences of his actions."

## Christian confronts violent world

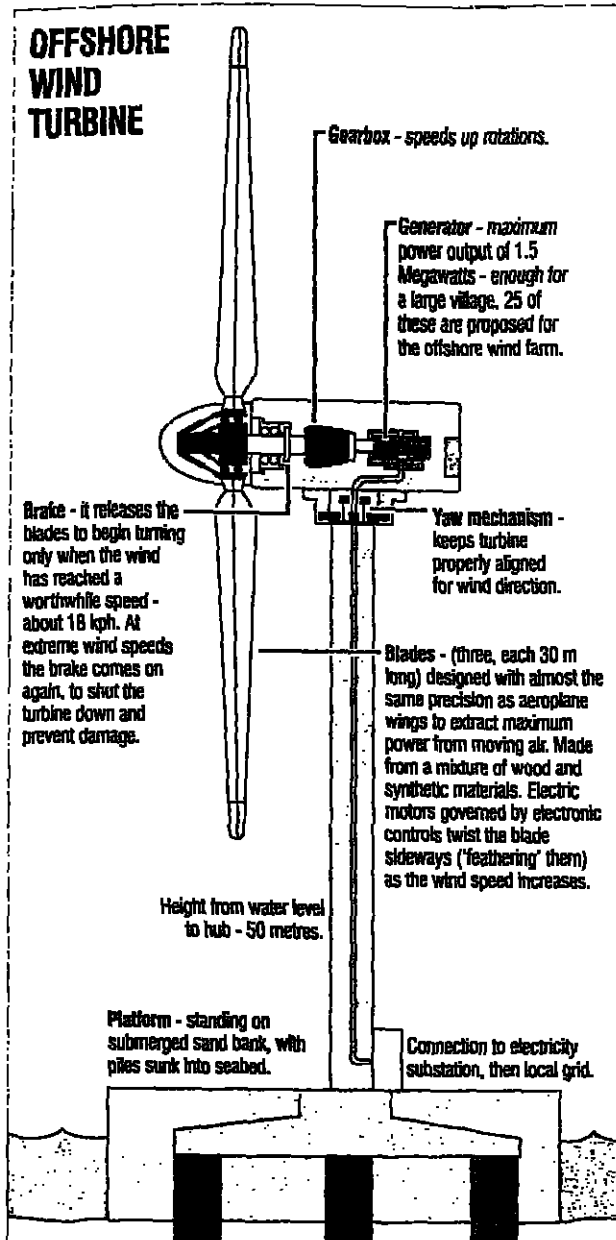
Andrew Brown on the clergy's stance in the face of rising attacks

The world has become a more violent place. This is a fact that Christians must accept. The world has become a more violent place. This is a fact that Christians must accept. The world has become a more violent place. This is a fact that Christians must accept.

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# Breezy Britain reaps the whirlwind



Power from the wind: Turbines stand atop a hill at Llandinam, Wales. Wind farms are close to being able to compete with fossil fuel energy sources. Photograph: Steve Peake

NICHOLAS SCHOON  
Environment Correspondent

First offshore wind farm set to power a town and generate environmentalists' hopes for renewable energy

PowerGen is planning to build Britain's first offshore wind farm two miles off the Norfolk coast. If the complex of 25 giant turbines goes ahead it could give wind energy development its biggest boost ever in the UK.

There are more than 30 land wind farms, thanks to both a subsidy scheme funded by electricity consumers through their bills, and to the fact that Britain is Europe's windiest large nation. The industry has always looked to moving offshore, where the winds blow stronger and steadier and the environ-

mental conflicts found inland can be minimised.

But in Great Yarmouth, from where the turbines would be visible, there was some concern at the proposal, particularly about the effect on the large numbers of seals which sometimes bask at low tide on a sandbank less than a quarter of a mile from the proposed site.

The 25 turbines would stand over 150ft tall from the tips of their topmost blade. They would be built on platforms in 13ft-deep shallows, and generate enough power for a town of 56,000 people. PowerGen,

Britain's second biggest generator, has submitted its project to the Department of Trade and Industry along with dozens of plans from other developers backing onshore wind farms. All of them are seeking the consumer subsidy used to fund renewable energy systems in Britain. PowerGen is also negotiating with the Crown Estate, which owns the seabed.

PowerGen plans to use new 1.5 megawatt turbines, two or three times the power of those being installed in onland farms. They would be made by the Danish firm Vesta, although there are

hopes that many British-made components will be used.

"This proposal is very good news," said Dr Ian Mays, President of the European Wind Energy Association and managing director of UK wind farm developer Renewable Energy Systems. "We have a huge wind resource offshore, and I'm sure the UK industry will be taking increasing advantage of the growing market here and overseas."

There are just three offshore wind farms in the world, all in Europe. Britain's first wind farm opened less than five years

ago - 10 electricity-generating windmills on a Cornish hilltop.

Wind farms in Britain generate sufficient electricity for a city the size of Bristol, but they have always been at the centre of debate. Conservationists have deplored the siting of several of them in beautiful upland areas. Some are next to national parks.

Sir Bernard Ingham, former press secretary to Margaret Thatcher, has rallied against them and is honorary president of an anti-wind farm group.

The environmentalist, Jonathan Porritt, says he finds their slim shapes and slowly turning

blades a beautiful and exciting pointer to a greener future.

Wind farms are close to being able to compete with conventional fossil fuel sources of energy. The price of wind-generated electricity has dropped steadily as the turbines have become mass-produced and reliable. The windiness of the site is all-important because the amount of power available is proportional to the wind-speed cubed.

But turbines usually have to be kept 300 metres from the nearest home because of noise. They cannot be close to trees

because these interfere with windflow. The hilltop wind farm at Penrhuddland near Llandinam, Powys, which has 103 turbines, has plagued neighbours living some distance away with its noise.

Wind generation could supply 10 per cent of UK electricity by 2025 with little increase in power bills, but there would be have to be many hundreds of wind farms, and they would dominate much of our breezy western and upland countryside. That is why the move offshore is so significant.

The great majority of turbines installed in Britain are imported. About £60m of Government money has been sunk into wind research and development but this has not yet given Britain a strong windpower industry.

One reason is that much of this taxpayers' money was spent developing vast multi-megawatt turbines much larger than those in demand today.

One reason is that much of this taxpayers' money was spent developing vast multi-megawatt turbines much larger than those in demand today.

The Danish strategy proved much more successful: the government there subsidised demand heavily during the 1980s, leaving it to the manufacturers to decide what were the most cost effective machines. Now its industry has a world lead.



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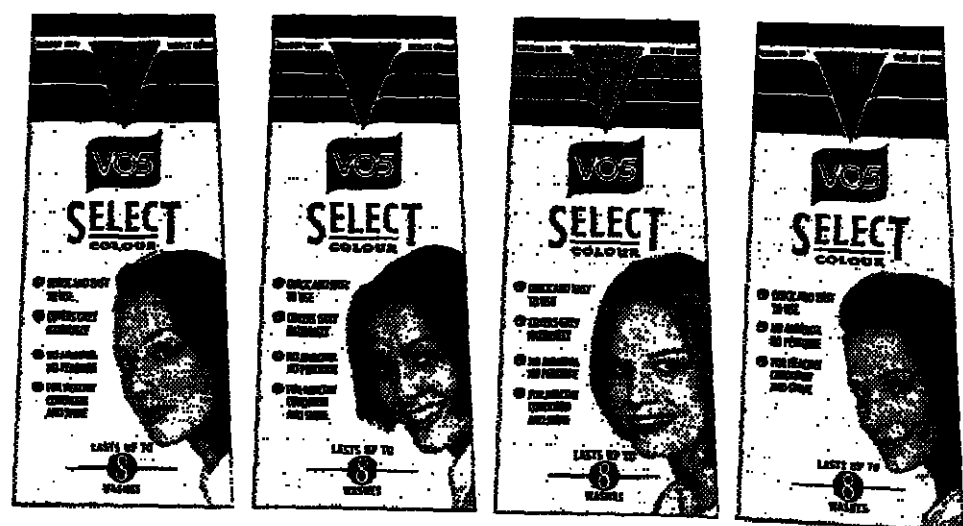
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edited by David Lister

Music industry: Euro 96 theme helps fuel surge in teenagers' favourite format

# Long-dead singles rise from the groove

DAVID LISTER

The death of the single, mourned for over two decades, has been greatly exaggerated. New figures show the traditional music format for teenagers is making a comeback.

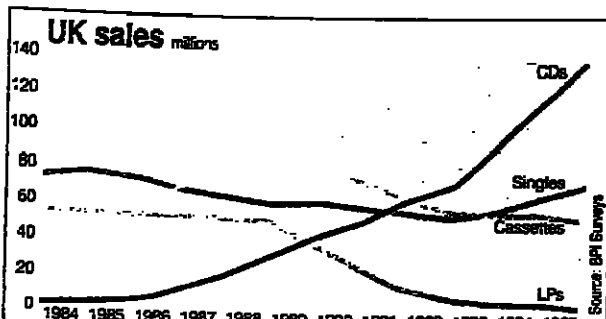
This summer has seen a surge in the sale of singles, due partly to the Euro 96 theme *Football's Coming Home*, and to the first release in five years from George Michael.

Britain now sells almost 17 per cent of the world market in singles compared to only 5.9 per cent of the album market.

According to Peter Scapling, secretary general of the British Phonographic Industry: "There are some elements about the structure of British society which make the single an immediately responsive element in recorded music entertainment."

There is also a mundane reason behind the success of the single. At £4.49 its price has not changed for five years; and this price is often halved by record shops in promotion wars.

But the resurrection of the single has been accompanied by the death of cassettes, which are continuing to lose ground to compact discs, following a dramatic fall last year.



The music industry is now so taken with the surge in singles that it is endeavouring to rewrite history and claim that the decline in singles' buying may have been a myth, as proper figures were never compiled in the 1960s.

The new statistical handbook from the British Phonographic Industry contains the statement: "In recent years, there have been several misinformed press stories suggesting that having a number-one single is not the achievement that it once was."

Unfortunately, there are no statistics from the 1960s available to test the theory. It is true, however, that the number of singles released now is far greater than was the case 30 years ago, so the feat of attaining the top

position could hardly be described as easy. The latest BPI statistical handbook, out today, shows that singles sales were particularly strong in 1995 when more than 70 million units were sold for the first time in 10 years.

The album market was 196 million. Cassette albums were the only casualty. The sale of 53 million marked a drop of 2.6 million on the previous year.

But the new figures for this summer, which are not included in the handbook, show the singles market is continuing to grow. Over 18 million were bought between April and June this year, almost 6 per cent more than in the same quarter the previous year, and 4 million more than in the equivalent quarter of 1993.

Of the 18 million, 11 million were CD singles, a 7 per cent increase in this format from the previous year. About 4.5 million were cassette singles, a drop of 4.6 per cent from the previous year and 2 million were 12in-vinyl singles, a drop of 2 per cent. Only 600,000 were traditional 7in-vinyl '45's, a drop of 0.5 per cent.

The cash generated from sales of singles rose by 11 per cent compared to the summer of 1993, with customers paying £28.5m in only three months. Over the same three months, 40 million albums were sold.

The main artists behind the singles bonanza were The Fugees, with their version of the soul classic *Killing Me Softly*. Gina G, Mark Morrison, Baddiel/Skinner/Lightning Seeds, with the Euro 96 anthem, and George Michael.

The other notable aspect of the figures released by the BPI is the way budget-price classical albums are increasing their share of the market. Last year 30.8 per cent of classical-album sales were budget price, 19.7 per cent were mid-price and 49.5 per cent were full price. In 1990 budget-price albums accounted for only 20 per cent of the market.



Top of the singles (clockwise from the top): George Michael, Gina G, Mark Morrison Skinner and Baddiel, and the Fugees were among the main artists behind the bonanza



Doomed prince: Robert Lepage Photograph: Geraint Lewis

## Ghost in the machinery foils Hamlet

MARIANNE MACDONALD Arts Correspondent

One of the most prestigious productions at this year's Edinburgh Festival has been cancelled at the last minute, leaving thousands of ticket-holders disappointed.

Yesterday Robert Lepage, the renowned actor and director, admitted that his reinterpretation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* would not see one performance.

*Elinore*, starring Mr Lepage himself, was to be the theatrical showpiece of the festival's first week, but the complicated technical equipment on which it relied broke down as it was due to open on Monday.

Mr Lepage said the problem had proved impossible to fix and that the show, due to run for five nights, had been cancelled.

The news will be a blow to the 3,000 people who had bought tickets costing between £6 and £20 to see what was described as "a remarkable synthesis of dazzling theatre technology and cinematic convention".

Mr Lepage explained at a press conference: "There was a huge piece of machinery that revolved and picks up huge pieces of sets. It depended on four motors to pick up the pieces, but one didn't respond."

Despite working round the

clock it proved impossible to mend, and the only available replacement part was in Canada. He was, he admitted, extremely embarrassed and conceded that such heavy reliance on technology may have been risky.

Everything had gone smoothly during rehearsals and in the six months that the show, by the Ex-Machina Company of Canada, had been touring abroad.

It is the first time in living memory that the Edinburgh Festival has lost such a high-profile show in such a way, and the cost to it is likely to be close to £100,000, but its director, Brian McMaster, said that the Festival had an insurance policy to cover such emergencies. The Bank of Scotland, which sponsored the show, had been "very supportive".

Mr McMaster said his staff would tell as many people as possible that the show would not be running. Tourist information offices in the city had been informed and credit card bookings would be automatically refunded.

The Ex-Machina Company was said to be devastated after having worked furiously to prepare the show for Edinburgh. It is due to tour Nottingham, Newcastle and Glasgow later this year and is also booked to appear at the National Theatre in London.

### DAILY POEM

Straddling  
By Fred Johnston

To know a settling place  
a gate that rests your elbows  
a view that dominates your next move  
a gesture over a wall that punctuates  
the given word, the agreed signature -  
To have all this from birth is a sort of peace

As not having it cuts to the bone  
roots to the quick the hesitancy  
in the heart, as if no steering were ever  
possible through the scragged charts  
you stuffed in pockets of memory, hazing  
A guess each time, always edging, bordering

What I know is this -  
our reach is never what we think it is  
no wall we build is utterly unbreachable  
sometimes a doubt is all that saves us  
sends us running to where the fault lies  
Straddling beyond our span we fall over always.

Fred Johnston, born in Belfast in 1951, is a journalist and critic for the *Irish Times*, who has published six collections of poetry. In 1972 he received a Hennessy Literary Award for Prose. *Middle*, his latest collection, is published by Salmon next year.

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# international

Peace in Chechnya: Rebels accuse Russians of refugee attack; Russia says rebels fired first

## Grozny ceasefire lasts five minutes

HELEN WOMACK  
Moscow

On the first day of the new ceasefire in Chechnya yesterday, rebels accused Russian helicopter pilots of firing rockets on a column of refugees, and sporadic shooting continued in the capital Grozny.

Despite the violations, however, fighting overall seemed to have been less intense than over the last eight days and in the evening, military representatives from both sides met to try and strengthen the ceasefire.

Matters had not looked hopeful in the morning when the commander of Russian forces, General Konstantin Pulikovskiy, denied that he and the rebel chief of staff, Aslan Maskhadov, had agreed a ceasefire as announced on Tuesday. All he would say was that his troops would not fire first.

The Chechens, who said the ceasefire had been agreed, accused the Russians of violating it only five minutes after it went into force at midday, with the air strike against fleeing civilians. "Today at 12.05pm, Russian aircraft launched a rocket attack against Grozny," said a rebel spokesman, Movladi Udogov, specifying the area in which it happened. "Many people have been killed."

A Reuters correspondent, Lawrence Sheets, said he saw from a distance how a helicopter fired a rocket at the time and in the area mentioned by Mr Udogov. The Russian side did not comment on the Chechen accusation but said the rebels had violated the truce by firing on its servicemen.

There was still some will to achieve a ceasefire, however. In the evening, Russian officers left their main base near Grozny to meet rebel representatives in

the village of Novye Atagi. Tass news agency said they would discuss "all questions linked with mutual obligations reached on Tuesday between Konstantin Pulikovskiy and Aslan Maskhadov on not opening fire unnecessarily".

A ceasefire was ordered by President Boris Yeltsin's new envoy to Chechnya, Alexander Lebed, who on Sunday made a lightning visit to the region and met Maskhadov. His political future now very much depends on whether the bloodshed comes to a quick end. An outsider in the Kremlin - he was appointed national security chief in June after coming third in the first round of the presidential elections - he has already made enemies for himself by criticising the government's handling of Chechnya.

On Monday, when he returned from the region, he declared that Mr Yeltsin was about to sign a decree, giving him more powers to make decisions over Chechnya and reducing the influence of the Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. RIA news agency said last night that the decree had been issued although Mr Yeltsin's press service, Izvestia, could not confirm this.

Izvestia said Mr Chernomyrdin and Mr Yeltsin's chief of administration, Anatoly Chubais, were against the decree because it would make General Lebed too powerful. "Lebed, whose talents in the military sphere are unquestioned, may be outclassed when it comes to Kremlin intrigue," it commented.

Mr Yeltsin was yesterday having routine medical checks before leaving on holiday. His new spokesman, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, said the leader was "in good working form".



Time to run: A Chechen woman fleeing the fighting in Grozny yesterday with her baby

Photograph: Reuters

## Olive branch confuses HK democrats

STEPHEN VINES  
Hong Kong

Having been alternately ignored and vilified by China, the leaders of the Democratic Party, Hong Kong's largest political party, are in a quandary as to how to respond to the Chinese government's first indication of a willingness to establish a dialogue.

At a meeting tonight the party's leaders are likely to ratify a decision to rebuff China's offer of a chance to participate in a Peking-run body, the Selection Committee, which will choose the head of the territory's government after next year's transfer of sovereignty, and be responsible for the appointment of members to a provisional legislature which will replace the current body after it has been dissolved by the incoming sovereign power.

The Chinese government previously favoured a policy of deploying the blunderbuss in dealing with the democrats, but it now appears to have gained the upper hand by offering an olive branch.

This was presented by the Chinese Vice-Premier, Qian Qichen, who has special responsibility for Hong Kong. He said that China was willing to work with those who "hold different opinions about the course and pace of democratic development as long as they share the common ground of support for the resumption of sovereignty". This is a far cry from the usual practice of branding the democrats' leaders as "subversives" and "stooges of the British imperialists".

The democrats quickly responded by saying they "strongly welcome" Mr Qian's remarks, describing them as "a positive and constructive step". However Martin Lee, the democrats' leader, firmly ruled out participation in the Selection Committee because "it is conditional on participating in a process which will undermine democracy in Hong Kong".

Democratic Party members fear that they will lose credibility by joining a body which is playing a role in dismantling elected bodies and replacing them with unelected provisional councils. They feel that they have secured

a high degree of popular support because of an uncompromising stand of opposing China's plans for undermining democratic institutions.

This position does not appear to be well understood in Hong Kong. A recent public opinion poll showed that 60 per cent of respondents wanted the Democratic Party to join the Selection Committee.

This finding will be music to the ears of officials in Peking who may have seen their invitation as a trap to force the democrats to assume the unfamiliar role of rejecting dialogue and being unwilling to compromise.

The 400-member Selection Committee is likely to turn out to be little more than a rubber stamp for Peking's candidates. Indeed it is clear that China will



Qian Qichen: China willing to work with democrats

only tolerate the appointment of someone it likes as head of the new administration. The front runner is the shipping magnate Tung Chee-hwa who is heavily in debt to Peking for bailing out his company when it was faced with ruin.

Meanwhile Chinese leaders, including President Jiang Zemin, have started to talk about the necessity of the territory being led by people who are "acceptable" to Hong Kongers. This may appear to be a rather unremarkable point of view but it replaces the former emphasis on loyalty to China.

The Chinese government does not wish to see the Democratic Party continuing to secure majority support. A more subtle approach, confronting the democrats with difficult choices, may well yield positive results.

## SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

**High-ranking army officers were responsible for the 1993 murder of Burundi's first freely elected president, Melchior Ndadaye, Belgian newspaper Le Soir said yesterday, citing a leaked United Nations report.**

The report concluded that the massacre of Tutsi civilians which followed the Hutu President's death was not spontaneous but orchestrated. Only four months after Ndadaye's landslide victory, officers of the Tutsi-dominated army staged an unsuccessful coup in which the president and prominent Hutus were killed. This set the stage for the civil strife in which tens of thousands have died. *Reuter - Brussels*

**Gunmen opened fire on Sunni Muslim worshippers outside a mosque in the port city in the south of Pakistan, killing 11 people and wounding nine others. Stunned witnesses said about 200 worshippers had gathered outside the New Town mosque for an Independence Day procession when the shooting occurred. *AP - Karachi***

**German prosecutors asked a court to send the US neo-Nazi leader, Gary Lauck, to jail for five years for playing a key role in smuggling extremist propaganda into Germany. Prosecutors told the court in Hamburg that Lauck, 43, deserved the maximum possible sentence because he had provided the main source of neo-Nazi propaganda in Germany in the last 20 years. *Reuter - Hamburg***

**Japan apologised for the first time to Second World War Filipino women sex slaves and a private fund pledged \$18,500 (£12,000) for each to atone for a black chapter in Japanese history. Four Filipinas who were kept in Japanese military brothels received a letter of "sincere apologies and remorse" from the Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto. "This is the happiest of moments of my life," said Maria Rosa Henson, 68, after receiving the letter. *Reuter - Manila***

**The Turkish navy flagship was towed back to its port with Greek assistance yesterday after running aground in Greek waters. Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos said. A Greek navy statement said the frigate Yavuz ran aground in the straits between the south-eastern Greek island of Kos and the Turkish coast during a non-aggressive passage through Greek waters on Tuesday. *Reuter - Athens***

**Indonesian authorities arrested 28 people, accusing them of belonging to a banned left-wing group blamed for anti-government rioting last month. The arrests were made on Sunday in the island of Bali, where the suspects are alleged to have fled after rioting in Jakarta on 27 July. Antara news agency said. *AP - Jakarta***

**Thousands of dead rats have been found floating in a river in India's north-eastern state of Assam and scared people have stopped fishing and drawing water from it. The United News of India (UNI) news agency said locals interpreted the death of the rats as an ominous sign. *Reuter - Gauhati, India***

**Vienna Philharmonic, one of Austria's last male strongholds, will admit women because there are not enough qualified men to keep the orchestra going, its director said. Werner Ressel noted 65 per cent of music school students were female. "This fact alone will make it necessary to accept women," he said. *Reuter - Vienna***

## Rome wary of laughing off Bossi

Separatist leader has bounced back, writes Andrew Gumbel

With most of the country at a standstill for the holidays, Italian newspapers tend to have a hard time filling their pages in August. Not this year though, thanks to the sheenigans of Umberto Bossi, the northern separatist leader who, with the keen eye of a well-versed expert in self-promotion, has taken full advantage of the lull to get everyone talking about him and little else.

Little had been heard of Mr Bossi since June, when his campaign to establish a separate state in the north, to be called Padania, came screeching to a halt as his party, the Northern League, was humiliated in a state of local elections.

But then, starting last week,

he decided it was time to go back on the offensive. The pretext was a list of appointments in Rai, the state broadcasting service, which heavily favoured supporters of government parties despite pledges by the new Prime Minister, Romano Prodi, to end such practices. Mr Bossi lashed out at the government, ordering his followers to burn their television licences and knock out transmission stations across the north of the country.

In the same breath, he expelled one of his party's most popular lieutenants, the former parliamentary speaker Irene

Pivetti, on the grounds that she wants to keep Italy as one country, albeit with a more federalist structure. Ms Pivetti instantly began organising rival rallies to Mr Bossi's, only to discover that her supporters were being intimidated by party loyalists in uniform green shirts.

Over the weekend Mr Bossi dropped another bombshell, accusing the secret services of planning a bomb attack on a bank in Milan with the intention of blaming it on him.

As usual, it is hard to know how seriously to take all this since Mr Bossi's threats tend to be seven parts bluff to three

parts performance art. The secret-service allegation, for example, has fallen apart already; the details of the supposed plot bear an uncanny resemblance to an episode from a futuristic political thriller penned four years ago by one of Mr Bossi's party colleagues.

Ms Pivetti's expulsion may also be a piece of political theatre intended to raise the League's profile. Two years ago another key party member, Roberto Maroni, walked out, citing irreconcilable differences with Mr Bossi, only to sink back later when no one was looking.

The government is never-

## Pilot piqued at cheek of Great Plane Robbers

MARY DEJEVSKY  
Paris

In a raid of such brazen audacity as to compare with Britain's Great Train Robbery, a gang of armed and masked robbers held up an Air France Europe passenger plane as it landed at Perpignan in south-west France on Tuesday evening and calmly removed two mailbags full of used banknotes from the hold. They completed their "Great Plane Robbery" in four minutes flat, and are now being hunted nationwide.

The hold-up was so quickly and sharply executed that police are uncertain about how many people they are looking for. They say it is between four and six.

In radio interviews yesterday, the captain of the plane, Vincent Roy, who had down the Airbus 320 on its four-hour flight from Paris, described what happened. "Just as we were about to leave the runway, two vehicles blocked our way," he said. "I called the control tower to ask what was going on, but then these armed and masked men came out, and I knew we were being held up."

According to Capt Roy, the

gang raised a banner saying "turn off the engines and open up the hold" - an instruction which shocked him as much by its use of the familiar tu form of the verb (pilots are used to being treated with exceptional deference) as by its content. Hearing shots fired, he switched off the engine, but was cool enough to say that he had no way of opening the hold from the cockpit and told them to do it themselves - which they did.

Then, Capt Roy said, they went to the hatch closest to where the cargo from Brinks - the international transporter of valuables - was, removed two mailbags and drove out of the airport. No one was hurt.

The 173 passengers and crew were allowed to leave the plane 45 minutes later. Perpignan is the airport closest to south-western French Mediterranean resorts, and this is one of the busiest holiday weeks of the summer in France.

Whether through embarrassment or confusion, no definitive value has yet been placed on the loss. Until yesterday afternoon, the only information was that the two bags weighed 28kg. The value of the contents was first estimated at 4 million French francs (£509,600), but it was later disclosed that the bags contained only Spanish pesetas, and that the value could be considerably less than first thought.

That such a hold-up could take place on the mainland raises serious questions about security, not just at Perpignan, but at other provincial airports. The gang was reportedly able to penetrate the runway area through a little-used back entrance that was concealed from the control tower by a mound. Local people use the mound as a vantage-point for watching the planes take off and it is also used by people coming to meet passengers. The robbers were able to wait there unsuspected.

Moreover, although the captain raised the alarm, the gang had fled the airport before anyone reached the scene. An official inquiry into the robbery was opened yesterday.

There is also a question about the transport of cash by air. Current French regulations require sums larger than 200,000 francs to be escorted by at least three guards when taken by road, but there are no similar regulations for the protection of air freight.

## Hopes dim for test ban treaty

TONY BARBER  
Europe Editor

International efforts to ban nuclear weapons tests suffered a serious setback yesterday when India made clear it would not lift its objections to a global test ban treaty. Diplomats at the 61-nation Conference on Disarmament in Geneva said there was virtually no prospect that the forum would adopt the text of the treaty, potentially the most far-reaching arms control measure in history.

The five declared nuclear powers - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States - have all stopped testing and support adoption of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). However, India and Iran say they will not sign the treaty in its present form, partly because it does not commit the declared nuclear powers to a timetable for dismantling their weapons.

Together with Israel and Pakistan, India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974, is regarded as a "threshold" nuclear power - one which either possesses nuclear weapons or is capable of assembling them at short notice. Both government

and opposition parties in New Delhi object to a treaty that would leave China in possession of nuclear weapons while failing to guarantee India's security.

Western countries had hoped that the conference would approve the treaty at a plenary session today and send it to the United Nations in New York for ratification by member-states. However, at a committee meeting yesterday, India's chief representative in Geneva confirmed that her government would block transmission of the treaty to the plenary session.

Pakistan said the CTBT talks would fail unless all nuclear "threshold" states signed it. "It is absolutely clear that this is a treaty about all nuclear-capable states. If one nuclear-capable state stays out of this treaty, the treaty is dead," said Munir Akram, Pakistan's ambassador at the talks.

The treaty would not take effect unless ratified by the five declared nuclear powers and the three "threshold" states.

Iran opposes the treaty on the grounds that it could enable foreign countries to use spy satellites to ensure compliance and demand "on-site" inspections of nuclear facilities.

## Brown delivers New York success

DAVID USBORNE  
New York

Tina Brown, Manhattan's most bitched-about British emigre, has given one in the eye to the sceptics who have loved to hate her ever since she assumed the editorship of the high-brow New Yorker in 1992. Under her stewardship, she has revealed, the magazine is clawing its way back to financial health.

Details of the unlikely and quite unexpected success were laid out in yesterday's New York Post, which secured an unusually candid interview with Ms Brown, 42, and the magazine's president, Tom Florio.

The New Yorker is not there quite yet, but if the self-congratulatory assertions of the pair are to be believed, it will be soon. For years it has been assumed by the city's media watchers that the weekly, beloved by East Coast intellectuals, could never turn a buck.

"It has been four long, hard years - but it is exciting to see all our work pay off," Ms Brown said. "By the end of next year we should be in profit."

Married to Harold Evans, the former editor of the Sunday Times, Ms Brown has a right to be pleased. Since moving from Vanity Fair, she has come under attack from aficionados who accused her of trying to bring it downmarket. The most recent firestorm occurred when the comedienne Roseanne Arnold helped edit one of its issues.

"In the past many people in this industry treated Tina a bit like a schoolgirl, they wouldn't show her the business side of publishing," said Mr Florio. "But we did and she helped us get to where we are now."

Although circulation has risen nearly 40 per cent, the recovery has also been helped by price increases and cost-cutting not previously experienced by the cosy New Yorker culture.

Ms Brown denies she has taken it downmarket. "I am really proud of it. It's hard to have that kind of circulation increase with cerebral material."

سكرا من الامان



URDAY  
4TH  
AUGUST



# international

## Party's hopes and fears hang on Dole's words

RUPERT CORNWELL  
San Diego

The advance publicity for once is no exaggeration. Still clearly trailing his Democratic opponent President Clinton, Bob Dole tonight will accept the Republican nomination for President - and the taciturn Kansan, for whom flowery oratory is an abhorrence, must give the speech of his life.

Yesterday brought the moment Mr Dole has yearned for ever since his first unsuccessful run for the White House in 1980: the traditional convention floor roll-call vote of states, formally bestowing the crown upon him at last, at his third time of asking. But he has spent most of the past two days elsewhere, working on the address that may make or break his campaign.

Thus far the convention has been an unexpected and almost unmitigated success for the Republicans. Even the major TV networks have paid their belated compliments, complaining bitterly that in the tightly scheduled live segments they run each night they have been largely forced to dance to

### THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

the tune of the organisers. In the past 10 days Mr Dole has achieved most of his major objectives. He has produced an arresting economic plan centred on a 1.5 per cent across-the-board tax cut, in the ebullient Jack Kemp he has picked arguably the strongest available Vice-Presidential running mate, and he has secured the endorsement of his arch foe Pat Buchanan.

Above all, in stark contrast to both the divisive and mean-spirited Houston four years ago and to the highly conservative platform approved here, the message sent out to ordinary Americans from the convention stage in San Diego this week has been refreshingly moderate, up-beat and youthful.

Presentations have been slick in the extreme. Abortion, the issue which more than any other divides the party, has gone virtually unmentioned at the

podium. Speaker Newt Gingrich, hitherto studiously kept out of the limelight, did appear on Tuesday night. But he scarcely referred to the deeply unpopular Congress he leads, extolling instead the virtues of compassion and charity, and hailing Martin Luther King as "the greatest Georgian of the 20th century".

No less assiduously, the party has pursued the female voters among whom Mr Dole is exceptionally weak. Women such as Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson of Texas and Christine Todd Whitman, New Jersey governor, have been constantly featured, and Tuesday's keynote speech was entrusted to the 38-year-old New York Congresswoman Susan Molinari, who came across less as a political heavyweight than a harassed young mother from a TV sitcom - exactly as Mr Dole's advisers intended.

"I don't know a mom today who isn't being stretched to the limit trying to hold down a job while trying to hold down the fort," she said, in a naked pitch for the support of middle-class, suburban women - just like her-

self. She added some effective barbs against Mr Clinton. Her speech would be "a lot like a Bill Clinton promise: It won't last long and will sound like a Republican talking." Bringing delegates to their feet, she depicted

him as a dishonest and devious radical, and his White House as a nest of "truth-dodging, FBI-abusing, privacy-violating, drug-coddling friends".

Now Mr Dole must similarly rise to the occasion. Contrary to myth, convention addresses are rarely decisive. There has been the odd exception - notably George Bush's "Read My Lips, No New Taxes" pledge in New Orleans in 1988, which galvanised the party and whose

abandonment contributed to the Republican defeat in 1992. The most memorable moments have been provided by non-candidates or losers: for the Republicans, Barry Goldwater's thunderous oratory in San Francisco in 1964; for the Democrats, Edward Kennedy's defiant but doomed heroics in 1980 when he failed to seize the nomination from sitting President Jimmy Carter, and Mario Cuomo's electrifying keynote speech four years later. But Mr Dole's case is different.

After a listless and bungling early campaign, the convention offers the candidate his biggest and best chance to sell himself to a sceptical public. At

73, he must dispel fears that he is too old, not least by providing the rousing vision that Americans, however unfairly, expect from their president, but which the pragmatic deal-maker Mr Dole has been conspicuously short on.

A poor speech would be a disaster, even a moderate one would run risk of being overshadowed by Mr Kemp, a compelling orator who makes his own acceptance speech immediately beforehand tonight. Mr Dole must recapture the momentum when he resigned from the Senate in June, setting out on his last campaign as "just a man... with nowhere to go but the White House, or home".



Waiting for Dole: Scott Foster, the 14-month-old son of a Republican delegate, takes a stroll at the San Diego convention Photograph: AP/Beth Keiser

## Republicans face up to black issues

The black vote is almost as reliably Democrat in America as it is for Nelson Mandela's African National Congress in South Africa.

Thus for a black South African journalist covering the Republican National Convention in San Diego the sprinkling of black faces was curiously familiar. It reminded him of the handful of his black countymen who accepted FW de Klerk's invitation to join the National Party before the first post-apartheid election in 1994.

They were shunned in the townships, derided as "token blacks". At National Party rallies their erstwhile white masters would stun them too, or accord them cringingly over-eager respect.

Similar scenes have been in evidence in San Diego at a gathering dominated by red-meat Republican white males. Although the Republicans belong to the party of Abraham Lincoln, the president who fought the Civil War to crush slavery, in recent years the Republicans' opposition to welfare and affirmative action and their tough measures against crime have been interpreted in many quarters - notably by Jesse Jackson - as code for "Keep the blacks down".

So who are these black people at the convention? Charlie Baskerville is a government administrator who lives in Maryland but was born in North Carolina, historically cotton-picking slave country. He explained that the earliest ancestors he had traced had been called Bulloch, until one was sold to a plantation owner bearing the name made famous by Sherlock Holmes.

"My friends," Mr Baskerville said, "call me Hound." Not that he has a lot of friends. Black ones, at any rate. "Black folks won't talk to me. I can't get through to them, man. They think I'm weird."

A wiry, grey-bearded man of evidently deep convictions, Mr Baskerville volunteered the information that he was about to complete his second master's

degree. He did so by way of explaining his Republican philosophy.

"My daddy brought us up in North Carolina to stand on our own two feet. Now what the Democrats tell us is that the white folks owe the black folks a living. And the great majority of the black folks, and our black leaders, believe this. They say if only the white man changed his racist ways, if only he stopped being this and that, then we'd all be just fine."

Mr Baskerville screws up his face in pain, in frustration. "When are they going to understand, man, that this is the slave mentality? When are they going to see that the welfare system is killing our people, killing our families? When are they going to see that affirmative action kills our dignity?"

The spectacle of Colin Powell addressing the Republican convention was a balm to Mr Baskerville's wounds, but not a cure. While the general is the most popular man in white America, he is viewed with suspicion among the black community. And what do the white delegates make of their black conferees? Do they entertain any notion that, for example, by having a black youth singing the national anthem at the opening on Monday they are persuading black Americans to vote for Bob Dole? A convention official explained the value the party organisers saw in having the likes of Mr Baskerville in attendance. "What we hope it will do," he said, "is that it will educate our supporters."

A possibly more compelling message is provided when an army of cleaners descends on the vast convention floor each lunchtime. Here there is no shortage of black faces.

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# Jet 'jigsaw' still puzzles TWA inquiry team

DAVID USBORNE  
New York

Investigators believe two separate explosions doomed TWA Flight 800 and are searching for a tell-all "fingerprint" that will determine whether the first blast was caused by a bomb in the passenger cabin.

Federal officials were yesterday speeding up efforts to reassemble wreckage of the plane in the main hangar of a Long Island airfield not far from where it fell to the ocean in a fireball on 17 July, killing all 230 on board. The work, which involves rebuilding the aircraft around a skeleton of chicken wire, is focusing on the section where the wings joined the fuselage where the worst damage has been found. The pattern of debris on the ocean floor also indicates that parts of the plane's underbelly beneath the wing junction fell to the sea first.

Evidence has also been found in the front cargo hold, where passenger bags were stowed, or in the cockpit. Both scenarios had been fed by evidence that the front of the aircraft was severed from the rest of the fuselage. Items from the hold and the cockpit have meant both areas have been more or less ruled out.

Discovery of fire damage in an area near where the leading edge of the right wing joined the plane has propelled new theories to the fore: that a bomb may have been placed in that area, in a food trolley or inside a carry-on bag. The inside-right engine also appears to have suffered much greater damage than the other three.

The "fingerprint" that forensic evidence might supply is so far eluding investigators. Preliminary testing by equipment at the hangar this week showed residue of PETN, a prime ingredient of an explosive known as detasheet or detcord and which can also be used in Semtex. But subsequent testing in Washington DC failed to confirm the presence of PETN.

With the possibility ever present that all the hoped-for evidence may have been washed away while the wreckage remained on the ocean floor - about 50 per cent of the plane has been retrieved - investigators are also looking for clues from the directions in which the metal was twisted as well as the pattern of metal fragments in the bodies of passengers.

Shards have been found in passengers' feet and legs, pointing to a blast from below the cabin, presumably from the fuel tank. But the extent of damage in that area suggests an explosion there was not sufficient to cripple the plane so decisively. "There is bending of metal but this bending we see says there was a low-energy explosion," a source said.

It may be, however, that divisions are opening in the investigation team as it approaches the one-month anniversary of the crash with no clear evidence of what happened that can be offered to the public. The same source told the Associated Press news agency: "Investigators are split. Some believe there was an explosion

in the forward part of the aircraft. As much as 20 seconds later the fuel tank blew up ... Others speculate that the tank may have been part of the initial blast."

The possibility of a missile attack is thought unlikely. It would almost certainly have been heat-seeking and therefore made initial contact with an engine as it roared to raise the plane to cruising altitude. All four engines have been located and none shows evidence of having been hit. The discovery of the engines has so far provided no evidence of mechanical mishap, including, for instance, the possibility that one may have become unhinged and hit other parts of the plane.



Conflicting evidence: An investigator with an engine from the plane, which is being reconstructed to try to find why it crashed

Photograph: AP

It may be divisions are opening as ... it approaches the one-month anniversary

suggesting one of the explosions was in the fuel tank between the wings and which was almost empty at the flight's outset. Sources have reported that that blast may have occurred up to 20 seconds after an earlier explosion elsewhere in the aircraft.

That finding, if proved, militates against an earlier theory that an electrical spark may have ignited the fuel tank, causing the initial blast that doomed the airliner. Thus investigators are again being drawn to the theory that a primary explosion, which may have triggered the tank blast, was caused by a bomb. In the absence of forensic evidence of an incendiary explosion, the two other primary theories remain under consideration: mechanical failure or a missile attack.

As to where a bomb may have been planted, wreckage retrieved this week clouded two early theories: that a detona-

## Three theories of catastrophe

### 1 Mechanical failure

The near-perfect safety record of the Boeing 747 has discouraged investigators from seeing mechanical failure as a likely cause.

Scenarios for such a calamity have also, one by one, been ruled out by what they have found.

The cockpit voice recorders, which showed a routine ascent and ended abruptly with a brief, unexplained noise, weigh against pilot error.

The possibility that an engine became unhinged and spun

into the rest of the plane is seen as unlikely, since all four engines have been found in reasonable condition.

Suggestions that an electrical spark might have ignited vapour in the central fuel tank have also been discounted. While parts of the tank show fire and smoke damage, other parts appear in pristine condition. It is now thought the tank may have ignited 20 seconds after an initial blast elsewhere on the plane.

Officials have spoken little about a further possibility: that the plane may have been torn apart by a catastrophic deployment after take-off of the engines' reverse thrusts.

but ruled out by investigators since the discovery of the fourth engine this week, however.

A missile would almost certainly have been guided by a heat-seeking system and initial contact would have been on an engine. All four have shown damage consistent only with impact on the ocean surface in the crash. Nor, so far, have forensic scientists found any evidence of an incendiary blast on the engines.

And a missile strike would not easily explain the instant loss of electrical power shown by the data and voice tapes. Forensic tests are still continuing.

discovery of some undamaged glass covers from cockpit instrumentation. The focus now is on the section where the forward edge of the wings joined the fuselage.

The shape of retrieved plane parts suggests two blasts, one that sent its force downwards from the cabin and another that came from below. Forensic tests at the hangar where the plane is being reassembled showed initial signs of the presence of PETN, the chief ingredient of a plastic explosive known as detasheet or detcord. But subsequent and much more reliable tests of the same wreckage parts conducted in Washington DC have failed to confirm these first results.

### 2 Missile attack

A favourite theory of anyone familiar with the 1990 novel *Stinger*. Written by Doug Horung, the book opens with the downing of an American airliner taking off from Boston by a man on a boat with a shoulder-launched Stinger missile.

This scenario was lent early credence by eyewitness sightings of an "object" streaking towards TWA800 just before it exploded as well as by an unexplained second blip on traffic-control radar stills.

A missile attack has been all

### 3 Bomb placed on board

Investigators want to believe a bomb doomed the aircraft after decapitating its front section. But nothing has surfaced yet to provide them with conclusive evidence.

An early theory that a bomb may have been detonated inside passenger luggage stowed in steel cargo containers in the front cargo hold was dashed after all the containers were retrieved and found to be in "unremarkable" condition. Suspicion about a cooler containing corns placed in the cockpit just before departure were also negated by the



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# obituaries / gazette

## Edgar Mansfield

Edgar Mansfield deserves much of the credit for the revival of British bookbinding in the second half of the 20th century. He galvanised bookbinding design and freed it to move forward.

The centenary of the death of William Morris has prompted much to be written about Morris and the Arts & Crafts movement which spread his ideas of the value of handwork, and the decorative style of his fabric and wallpaper designs. This style, in a form disseminated first by the gentleman amateur T.J. Cobden-Sanderson, who was prompted to take up bookbinding by May Morris, dominated British fine bookbinding for the next half-century, largely as a result of the manual written by his apprentice at the Doves Bindery, Douglas Cockerell.

*Bookbinding and the Care of Books*, first published in 1901 and still in print 95 years later, probably remains the first manual that most beginners will pick up. It treats cover design only in terms of ornamentation built up from a few simple decorative units by the repetition of individual tooled impressions, plain or gold. The Arts & Crafts style appeared in French bindings with the work of Marius Michel, but the Parisian ateliers and their designers went on to absorb Art Deco, Surrealism and Cubism, and by the 1930s and 1940s they were producing gloriously extravagant fine bindings of the spectacular illustrated editions of *Le Livre* for collectors, whilst the English taste for tradition and conformity and that curious cult of "original condition" in book collecting left little creative work for fine binders.

No wonder that Philip James, reviewing a 1949 exhibition of modern bookbindings in the *Studio*, wrote:

[The exhibition] reveals that this noble, ancient art is very much alive in France, even if it is restricted in its most developed state to the commissions of wealthy patrons, but that it is virtually dead in this country. Bookbinding is now one of those handicrafts, like pottery or weaving, which attract a few isolated performers who feel the same compulsion to create as untrained the painter or sculptor. Today the work is its own reward, so few are the commissions, so dim the prospects of a revival.

He continued with a plea:

A vigorous, school of original binders who, while respecting the limitations imposed by the nature of a book and its use by the reader, yet work in a

style which springs from contemporary art forms, is absolutely necessary for the development of bookbinding.

Edgar Mansfield was just such an original binder and, the writer was seeking and, the year before, he had commenced teaching design to bookbinding students at the London School of Printing. Perhaps it was because Mansfield had come to Europe as an outsider that he could accept and absorb the modern movement in art, at a time when we were trying to ignore it or dismiss it with ridicule.

Born in London in 1907, he was taken to New Zealand by his parents at the age of four, matriculating from Napier Boys' High School in 1923, he then began 10 years of study and teaching of art and crafts. He returned to London in 1934 to extend his studies, of pottery at Camberwell School of Art & Crafts and bookbinding under William Matthews at the Central School of Art & Crafts. In 1936 he began an extensive course in design at the German Reichmann School in London under Elsa Taterka. Following war service with the British army from 1941 to 1946 he was repatriated to New Zealand, but returned to London in 1947 to continue bookbinding and design. For much of his active life he divided his time between the two countries, and considered himself "a New Zealander through and through".

He had been elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 1934, and in 1950 was elected Member of the German Bookbinders Guild (MDE).

From 1948 to 1964, he taught design and colour at the London School of Printing. Even in art schools in the Fifties, abstraction and "School of Paris" ideas had barely penetrated and artists such as Picasso and Henry Moore were stock figures of fun to *Punch* cartoonists. But Mansfield's enthusiasm and encouragement to students and the younger binders was infectious. A "Mansfield style" was detected in the new designs from the London College of Printing students, some of whose names became familiar in bookbinding circles: Don Elberington and Faith Shannon for instance, and Anthony Cains, later to be Director of the Conservation Laboratory at Trinity College Dublin, who pushed Mansfield's technique of manipulating the grain of the



Mansfield: an outsider

leather during covering to the extreme of expressive leather puckering as the binding's sole design medium.

I have been saddened that subsequent generations of bookbinders have seemed unaware of what he achieved on their behalf. I had the good fortune to know him for four decades, since I - a green young student - was invited to attend the first meeting of the Guild of Contemporary Bookbinders in Bernard Middleton's London workshop at 63 Broadwick Street, Soho, on the evening of 7 April 1955. This small group of like-minded bookbinders, banding together to mount exhibitions of their work under the initial prompting of Bernard Middleton and Arthur Johnson, with Edgar Mansfield as their President, became the present Designer Bookbinders, a flourishing society with about 700 members world-wide, and currently 17 Honorary Fellows, 28 Fellows and eight Licentiates.

During his Presidency of the Guild of Contemporary Bookbinders, from 1955 to 1968, the society mounted an ambitious exhibition programme and many travelling exhibitions in Europe and across the United States were arranged, as well as regular exhibitions at Foyle's Gallery in London, plus others elsewhere, of which the Harrods exhibition of 1958 was perhaps the pivotal event, attracting wide notice in Britain and on the Continent. Mansfield taught us the benefits of publicity, that our work should be photographed and published where possible, and particularly through publication in German, French and Dutch trade magazines. He was made an Honorary Fellow of Designer Bookbinders in 1968.

His teaching at the London School of Printing extended

until he retired in 1964 in order, in his words, "to concentrate entirely on creative experiment, and to spend more time at home - in New Zealand". In the 1979 Birthday Honours list came his appointment as OBE for services to New Zealand, and in 1980 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors (FRBS).

Although he never stopped creating new drawings and designs, Edgar Mansfield had ceased binding about 20 years ago, with the exception of one presentation binding - a commission reluctantly accepted from the New Zealand authorities some time after he had decided that his eyesight no longer allowed him to continue binding to the high standard he desired. It was a wedding gift for Princess Anne, completed in 1974, after which he concentrated on his sculpture and drawings until he agreed to collaborate with James Brockman on a group of 25 new bindings commissioned by K.D. Duval and C.H. Hamilton. The evening of 30 November 1993, when we gathered in the King's Library of the British Museum to see these bindings, exhibited alongside the Designer Bookbinders' Bookbinding Competition entries, was a rare chance for the younger generation to glimpse him for the first time, and a happy reunion with many old friends.

I was one of many binders to receive encouragement and advice about my work from Edgar Mansfield. A letter from c1960 gives some of the flavour of his correspondence: I am still struggling frantically with design problems and hope you are too... I would urge you to visit the then, see books like *Kaplan's New Landscape in Art & Science* by Klee especially... Your design will become more difficult & take longer in course of time but I urge you to work like hell & get all you can completed. There will never be enough creative work available for our future needs - of that I am absolutely certain. All the best, Edgar.

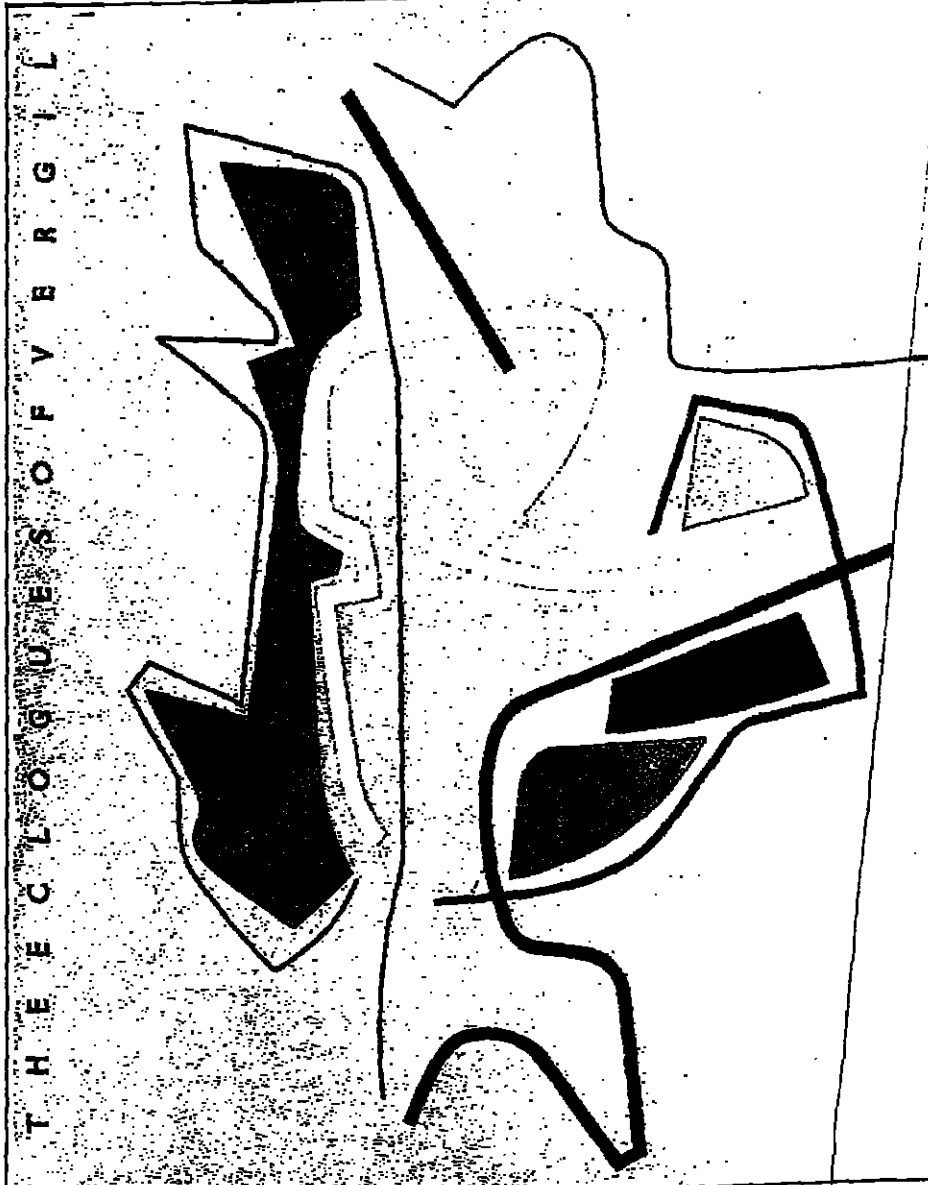
For him, the creative act could be as soon be drawing, or painting, or sculpture, as bookbinding, an attitude which may have helped to ease the moment when his eyesight would no longer allow him to translate his designs into that medium.

Those who admire Edgar Mansfield's bindings and are convinced of their important place in the development of bookbinding, may be discon-

certed by the thought that the craft could matter less to him than he does to it. He seemed most unconcerned about the quality of the volumes he chose to cover; they were often standard publishers' editions and could be inferior examples of printing. The book he chose to bind most frequently, H.E. Bates's *Through the Woods*, was hardly Cobden-Sanderson's ideal book or "the book beautiful", although it became the vehicle for a memorable series of designs. Very likely the cost of buying examples of fine printing was the limiting factor in the early days, when collectors were not interested in his work; but as he became recognised he had the opportunity to bind better books. Nor was he interested in refining the structure of his bindings. Having arrived at a simple and serviceable routine, he standardised it. It is as though Mansfield thought of the book as no more than the blank canvas awaiting his creative act.

The nature of the surface of a Mansfield binding and its tactile quality is most important, as befits the work of a sculptor. His preference was always for unpolished and unpressed goatskin enlivened with surface markings and blems, especially the native tanned and dyed skins once obtainable from Nigeria that displayed variations of tone and colour, if necessary with his own added ink markings. He often heightened the grain texture on the leather of his bindings by rolling the damp skin on itself before pasting, and later brushing towards the spine with the palm of his hand across the surface of the leather in the act of covering the book.

Embellishment of the book cover had traditionally been a matter of borrowings from the decorative arts, and even the French Art Deco bindings that acknowledged Cubism did so at second hand, following its adoption as a style for interior decoration. The originality and novelty of his binding designs was that they used the language of fine art. That Mansfield was inspired by the abstract painting of his times is obvious: one can see echoes of Miró, Klee and Picasso in the sometimes jagged, sometimes playful, shapes of his inlays and in the dancing lines of his tooling. Surrealism is an influence, and an interest in the ges-



Dancing lines: binding by Mansfield for Virgil's *Eclues* (Cresset Press, 1927) - native-dyed bright yellow morocco with recessed inlays in white, black, grey, green and red, tooled in blind and black, 1983

in sculpture, drawing and book-binding design, came from natural forms, evident both in the book titles he returns to so often - *Country Matters*, *Through the Woods*, *Down the River*, *Four Hedges*, *The Seasons* - and in the growing, flying, swimming, branching forms, and the lines and textures that so often choke foliage, the leaf and its veins, wing, and fin.

We are fortunate in having an excellent record of his design philosophy and processes and the technical means he devised to create his bindings in the book *Modern Design in Bookbinding: the work of Edgar Mansfield* (1966). A new edition is long overdue.

Mansfield will be remembered for demonstrating that bookbinding is as appropriate a medium for the artist as painting and sculpture. He was

an energetic and enthusiastic campaigner against a conservative trade's incomprehension, ridicule and mistrust of modern design in fine bookbinding. His long-held and as yet unfulfilled hope was for recognition for the best of modern bookbinding by the fine art world. One does indeed wonder at the convention which would accord artistic status to his sculptures but not to his bindings.

Trevor Jones

James Frank Edgar Mansfield, bookbinder: born London, 11 February 1907; FRSA 1934; President, Guild of Contemporary Bookbinders 1955-68; Honorary Fellow, Designer Bookbinders 1968; OBE 1979; FRBS 1980; married 1980 Mrs Gladys Lockhead (died 1991; one stepson); died Bearsted, Kent 10 August 1996.

## Marshal Antonio de Spínola

Antonio de Spínola was the old Portuguese colonial soldier who became the improbable hero of Portugal's April 1974 revolution.

I first saw him almost on a daily basis when I was 10 years old and he was courting the daughter of a general who lived in our street. Always in uniform, with monocled right eye and horse-rider's swagger-stick, he was known in our neighbourhood as one of the young generation of officers ready to fight for Fascism and empire in the 1930s. The son of a senior official in the dictator Antonio Salazar's regime, he fought for Franco's side in the Spanish Civil War, and completed his training with Hitler's army as an observer on the Russian front.

After the Allied victory and decades of enforced stability both in Portugal and the far-flung empire, all that training and experience seemed somewhat wasted until the 1960s when, by then a lieutenant-colonel, he was sent to Angola to quell the first African nationalist uprising which eventually, with Soviet bloc support, was extended to Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique.

As a military commander in Guinea-Bissau, and after a relatively successful Africanisa-



Spínola: swagger-stick

tion programme largely based upon more modern models used in Vietnam and elsewhere, whereby nearly half of the (Portuguese) Guinean army was formed by African troops, he became something of a hero in the Portuguese colonial wars.

By then the decades old national-colonialist regime created by Salazar and halfheartedly carried on by his successor Marcelo Caetano had reached a mortal impasse. As so often happens with prolonged personal dictatorship the long experience of enforced stability degenerated into mutual fear and paralysis within the ranks of the regime, and the inability of the democratic op-

position to organise a convincing alternative. It was then that Spínola played a crucial and truly heroic role.

Since the initiative for the dramatic political impasse could only come from within the ranks of the regime, he wrote a book in which, after acknowledging that the colonial impasse could only be resolved by political, rather than military means, he put forward a plan for a Pan-Portuguese multi-racial federation or community, similar to the British Commonwealth and its French equivalent, as a way out.

In the event the book, *Portugal and the Future*, published in February 1974, was like the key that opened the door for the military *pronunciamento* cum popular and festive revolution that was to follow the arrests and deportation to Madeira first of the token President Americo Thomas and Prime Minister Caetano.

As for Spínola, he was chosen to become President of the restored Democratic Republic, almost as a reward. However, subsequent events were to show that, having opened the door to liberalisation, he was soon overtaken by the revolutionary crowd that rushed through it. During his

five-month tenure of the presidency he tried to find solutions for successive crises and the prospect of the disintegration of the old empire, with meetings with other improbable heads of state, including President Mobutu of Zaire and President Nixon of the United States, then already facing impeachment, whom he met in mid-Atlantic in the Azores.

After he was elbowed out of power in September 1974 and replaced by his left-wing rival General Costa Gomes, likewise a prominent colonial commander, the widespread fear of a Communist takeover led him to seek exile in Brazil, from where he travelled to gather support for what would be tantamount to a counter-revolution. The perceived Communist threat was eventually thwarted when a new balance of forces within the regime succeeded in re-establishing a country of law and order.

After returning to Portugal in 1976 Spínola opted for retirement in his farmhouse near Lisbon. He became a mere spectator to Portugal's accelerated development upon integration into the EEC in the 1980s under a centre-right government more to his liking. He lived to witness the Por-

tuguese eventually become richer than he had ever been while they had clung to the empire, through the vagaries of history and the benefits of Portugal's return to its European condition.

Democratic, capitalist-orientated Portugal is now one of the main investors in the war-ravaged but potentially rich former colonies of Angola and Mozambique. And, only two weeks ago, the Community of the Countries of Portuguese Language, comprising all the former five African colonies as well as Brazil, was finally formalised at a Pan-Portuguese summit in Lisbon.

Antonio de Figueiredo

António Sebastião Ribeiro de Spínola, soldier: born Estremoz, Portugal, 11 April 1916; Commander, 345th Cavalry Group, Angola 1961-64; Provost Marshal 1964-65; Cavalry Inspector 1966-67; Deputy Commander, National Republican Guard 1967-68; Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Portuguese Guinea 1968-73; Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces 1973-74; Head, Junta Nacional de Salvação 1974; President of Portugal, 1974; married 1932 Maria Monteiro de Barros; died Lisbon 13 August 1996.

## Mel Taylor

Mel Taylor was a pioneer rock 'n' roll drummer, and a vital member of the Ventures throughout most of their career as America's foremost instrumental rock group.

Although Taylor was not a founder member of the Ventures, he played on many of their greatest hits, including the 1964 re-make of "Walk Don't Run" and their version of "Hawaii Five-O", the television theme-tune notable for its dramatic drum introduction.

The art of pop drumming was liberated and given a great

boost by the advent of Surf music during the early Sixties. Instrumental groups like the Chantays, who hit with "Pipeline" in 1963, and the Surfaris, whose "Wipe Out" charted the same year, made heavy use of a compelling new tom-tom rhythm that reached its apogee on "Hawaii Five-O". Rock 'n' roll until then had relied on a tightly knit shuffle beat, derived mainly from Rhythm and Blues.

It was the strong blend of dynamic drumming and echoing guitars that gave the Ventures their special sound and

appeal and made them one of the most influential bands of the Sixties, although they in turn were influenced by the surfing craze.

They were formed in Seattle in 1959 by Bob Bogle and Don Wilson (guitars), with Nokie Edwards on bass and Howie Johnson on drums. Their first single, "Walk Don't Run", was recorded for Blue Horizon in 1959, a label formed by Don Wilson's mother. Copies were mailed to DJs, but the record only became a Top Ten hit and a million-seller, when it was released on

the Dolton label in America and on Top Rank in Britain. It was the same year the Shadows scored their big instrumental hit with "Apache".

The Ventures developed the policy of giving a guitar treatment to familiar themes and they had hit with "Perfidia" in 1960 followed by "Ram-Bunk-Shus" in 1961. The same year Howie Johnson was injured in a car crash and was replaced by Mel Taylor.

Thereafter Taylor recorded and toured extensively with the Ventures and was heard on

"Walk Don't Run '64", a re-working of their original 1960 hit. Although fashions changed and the Ventures' popularity waned during the Beatles era, the group scored one of their biggest hits in 1969 with their version of "Hawaii Five-O" which got to No 4 in the US *Billboard* chart.

Bob Henri, the Kinks' drummer and author of a forthcoming book on percussion history, says Taylor was an important figure and an excellent performer. He acknowledges that the early Ventures records

made considerable impact on British groups:

We'd never heard anything like those 16th-note beats on "Walk Don't Run" on a pop record before. As far as we know Mel Taylor was the drummer on the second version, but there is never enough evidence about these things. It could easily have been Sandy Nelson! And it's a moot point about who played that very complicated run on the original TV soundtrack version of "Hawaii Five-O". Many believe it to be the work of session drummer Hal Blaine.

In 1973 Mel Taylor left the Ventures to form Mel Taylor

and the Dynamics but returned to the fold in 1978 and remained with the band for the next 18 years. They continued to record a stream of albums, many solely for the Japanese market and usually featuring instrumental versions of the hits of the day. As their own hits dried up in Britain and the United States, the band increasingly turned its attention to Japan where they became hugely popular and toured every year. By the mid-Nineties their clanky guitar sound had become fashionable once more, thanks to the in-

clusion of their classic "Surf Rider" in the 1994 Quentin Tarantino film *Pulp Fiction* when it was performed on the soundtrack by the Lively Ones. In 1996 the Fender musical instrument makers issued a line of Ventures model electric guitars, as a tribute to the veteran group's contribution to rock music.

Chris Welch

Mel Taylor: drummer: born New York City 1934; married (three sons, three daughters); died Los Angeles 11 August 1996.

### BIRTHS

ROSSITER: On 9 August 1996, to Janice (née Horton) and Timothy, a daughter, Catherine Helen, sister to Jennifer and not forgetting Peter.

STEVE: On 7 August, to Michelle (née Meaker) and Tim, a daughter, Rebekah Alice Daley.

### DEATHS

MCCULLOCH: Keith, on 13 August 1996, aged 41. Classics master at

## Births, Marriages & Deaths

King's School, Worcester, married devotedly at home by his wife Maureen and his children Harriet, Frances and

Clemmie, who all loved him very much. Keith's mother and brothers, John and Stuart are grateful to Maureen, the children and the nursing team for the care shown to Keith and for the love, care and kindness of friends and neighbours. Funeral at the Priory, Malvern, 20 August, at 12.45pm.

PERREY: Caroline Richards, on Monday 12 August 1996. Wife of Rupert, member of Grimsby, Paris, Alexis and Christopher. Grandmother of Sally and Emil. At peace with herself.

### Birthdays

The Princess Royal, 46; Sir Charles Carter, economist, 77; Mr Jim Dale, actor, 61; Mr Edmund Dell, former government minister and chairman, Prison Reform Trust, 75; Mr Hans Feibusch, mural painter and sculptor, 98; Mr James Flecker, Headmaster, Ardingly College, 57; Mr Lukas Foss, composer, 74; Mrs Jenny Hanley, actress, 49; Dame Wendy

Hiller, actress, 84; Miss Rita Hunter, soprano, 63; Lord Ingham, former Lord-Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, 79; Miss Joan Jefferson (Lady Appleby), former Headmistress, St Swithun's School, Winchester, 50; Mr Jack Lynch, former Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, 79; Mr Edward McMillan-Scott, MEP 47; Sir Patrick Nairne, Chancellor, Essex University, 75; Sir Kenneth Newman, former

Commissioner, Metropolitan Police, 70; Mr Ken Kenyon, 70; Mr Oscar Peterson, jazz pianist, 71; Sir Oliver Popplewell, High Court judge, 60; Professor Sir Leon Radziszewski, criminologist, 90; Lady Jean Rankin, Extra Woman of the Bedchamber to the Queen Mother, 91; Mr Martin Redmond MP, 59; Mr Jack Russell, cricketer, 33; Sir Michael Rutter, child psychiatrist, 63; Air Vice-

Marshal John de Milt Severne, Extra Equerry to the Queen, 71; Lord Steyn, a Lord Justice of Appeal, 64; Sir Stephen Tumin, circuit judge and former Chief Inspector of Prisons in England and Wales, 66; The Hon William Wedderburn MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 56; Sir Kenneth Warren, engineering consultant, 70; Air Vice-Marshal Sir William Whitten, 57.

Announcements for Deaths, BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DT, telephoned on 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2018, and are charged at 66.50 a line (VAT extra).

Changing of the Guard  
The Household Cavalry Regiment marches the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

سكنا من الاصل



# The timetable should rule out elitism

This morning a familiar scene is being played out in sixth-form blocks all over the country. Everywhere, nervous groups of 18-year-olds are waiting at their schools to receive the envelopes that contain their futures. There will be tears of joy and of bitter disappointment. Some students will sink to the floor in relief or despair; others will rush home to spread the good news or to lick their wounds in private. There can be few places in England where such extremes of emotion are being displayed today.

These scenes have barely changed in the 45 years since A-levels were first introduced, but in fact almost everything else about them is different. In 1951, less than five per cent of 18-year-olds took the exams, and one in three failed. Now a third take them and six out of seven pass. In the Fifties about 30,000 people went to university each year; this autumn 290,000 will do so. With so many more people taking these exams, common sense would suggest that the pass rate should have gone down. After all, when only the very brightest took them they must have had a better chance of getting through, one might argue. But common sense is not always right.

At first glance it does appear curious that the pass rates have continued to go up while the staying-on rates have grown, but there is no disputing the fig-



ONE CANADA SQUARE, CANARY WHARF LONDON E14 6DL  
TELEPHONE 071-293 2000 / 071-345 2000 FAX 071-293 2435 / 071-345 2435

ures. In 1968 the A-level pass rate was 65 per cent, while today it has risen to 86 per cent. Not surprisingly, this has led to anguished cries from the traditionalist end of the political spectrum about falling standards. Those who would like to see the education system frozen in its Fifties incarnation argue that we are devaluing our qualifications by allowing more and more people to pass.

To some extent, they are right. Some education academics believe that expansion may have caused a gradual change in examiners' perceptions of who should pass and who should fail. A candidate whose entry appeared only average among a narrow, elite group could appear very good among a much wider range of abilities. Although there has not been any grand conspiracy, the rapid rise in the pass rate - almost two per cent this year - is probably due in part to these incremental pressures.

But before we throw up our hands in horror and call for tighter codes of conduct for examiners, or even demand the nationalisation of the exam boards, we should think carefully about what we want from our examinations system. Ten years ago a policy decision was taken to expand the higher education system so that the proportion of people going to university would be closer to our economic rivals. There are some die-hard elitists who hanker for

the old days when only a select and tiny band trooped off to college, while the rest got on in the university of life. But fortunately they are few: the right decision was to expand the numbers in higher education, not only because it is socially proper for the widest possible range of people to have the opportunity to achieve their full potential, but also because we need a developed workforce. The market for unskilled labour is shrinking, and, without a highly qualified workforce, Britain will not be able to compete. There is no going back.

If we are ready to accept that our

education system should aim to widen access rather than exclude all but a tiny proportion from its upper echelons, we must have an exam system to match. A-levels designed for a tiny proportion of students would be completely inappropriate in the 1990s. So, naturally and gradually, they have changed to meet the demands of the modern system.

Apert from the fact that numbers have increased, teaching methods in universities have changed beyond recognition. A-levels have adapted accordingly. In some subjects they have been broken down into modules that are examined separately rather than through a final exam, and as a result they fit more closely to the short-course approach that is used in universities. Even if such changes have allowed A-levels to become marginally easier, is that necessarily such a bad thing? At the moment 17 per cent of those who start a course still drop out, and a further 15 per cent fail. No exam system is working properly if it automatically consigns a third of its candidates to the scrap heap.

But broadening the scope of A-levels is not enough. We need to measure and accredit students' achievements rather than setting up hurdles that only a small proportion can jump.

There are other university entrance exams. Plans to extend special papers for the very brightest pupils are already afoot, and vocational A-levels are already in place in large numbers of schools. Many mature students win places by taking access courses set up for those without conventional qualifications. Instead of trying to hold on to the past, traditionalists should throw their support behind these exams. Efforts are being made to update the A-level points system so that all students' achievements can count towards university entrance. They should be applauded and encouraged (as well as closely scrutinised). Regarding them with automatic suspicion is no help at all.

At the heart of the annual row over

A-level standards is a deep-seated elitism which is hard to shake. Even those who publicly support the principle of access for all are less sure in their hearts that they really want it. But the fact is that education is becoming broader and more diverse, and that trend is not going to be reversed. If the examinations system is not allowed to catch up, it will look increasingly like a throwback to the 1950s.

## The trouble with kids today is...

h, those blue remembered hills! Then, of course, children roamed the countryside, climbed trees, picked bluebells, sailed wooden yachts and disappeared for afternoons on end. Now, as our report today reveals, by the age of 10 they are slapping on the lipply, plugging into the Net and imagining life with a mortgage, a motor and a mistress.

Some of this is misplaced nostalgia, but some of it is genuinely regrettable. The evidence shows that watching a lot of bad TV and silly videos adds the developing brain. In our cities, danger on the roads imprisons children far more effectively than the fear of strangers. So parents, it's in your hands. Smash your tellys and sell your cars.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Crumbling morale in the RAF

Sir: Your article "Nimrod on a wing and a prayer" (12 August) merely touched the surface of the problems the RAF and the military are experiencing. Both politicians and senior officers are constantly denying claims that there is any problem of morale or overstretch in today's Air Force. In contrast to these denials, if you talk to the people at the front line (which I do) you will find a force in real despair at what they perceive is a lack of acknowledgement or understanding of their grievances and concerns.

One only has to read the letters page of the in-house paper the *RAF News* to find constant references to "plummeting morale", "bland reassurances", "enough is enough" and "really hacked off" from the embattled troops. The RAF's answer to these complaints was to announce that "letters critical of... sensitive areas in the RAF... would be subject to vetting". Is this really the way to treat a professional, disciplined team?

I have recently been described, in a national newspaper, by anonymous senior officers as "someone who has just been in the cockpit. Someone who has never been at higher levels or exposed to any proper argument and never had anything to do with anything". I acknowledge that I have never held senior office but I have been exposed to enemy fire in the Gulf and in Bosnia; I think this allows me to comment despite the fact that I did not spend my 15 years behind a desk.

The RAF is overstretched, morale is at a dangerous low, people are unhappy with the lack of direction and leadership. The real danger in this is to the personnel themselves, because they have the "can do" attitude; their dedication, professionalism and pride will not allow them to admit defeat; they can, however, be broken. If that happens the military and political leadership will have a monumental tragedy on its conscience.

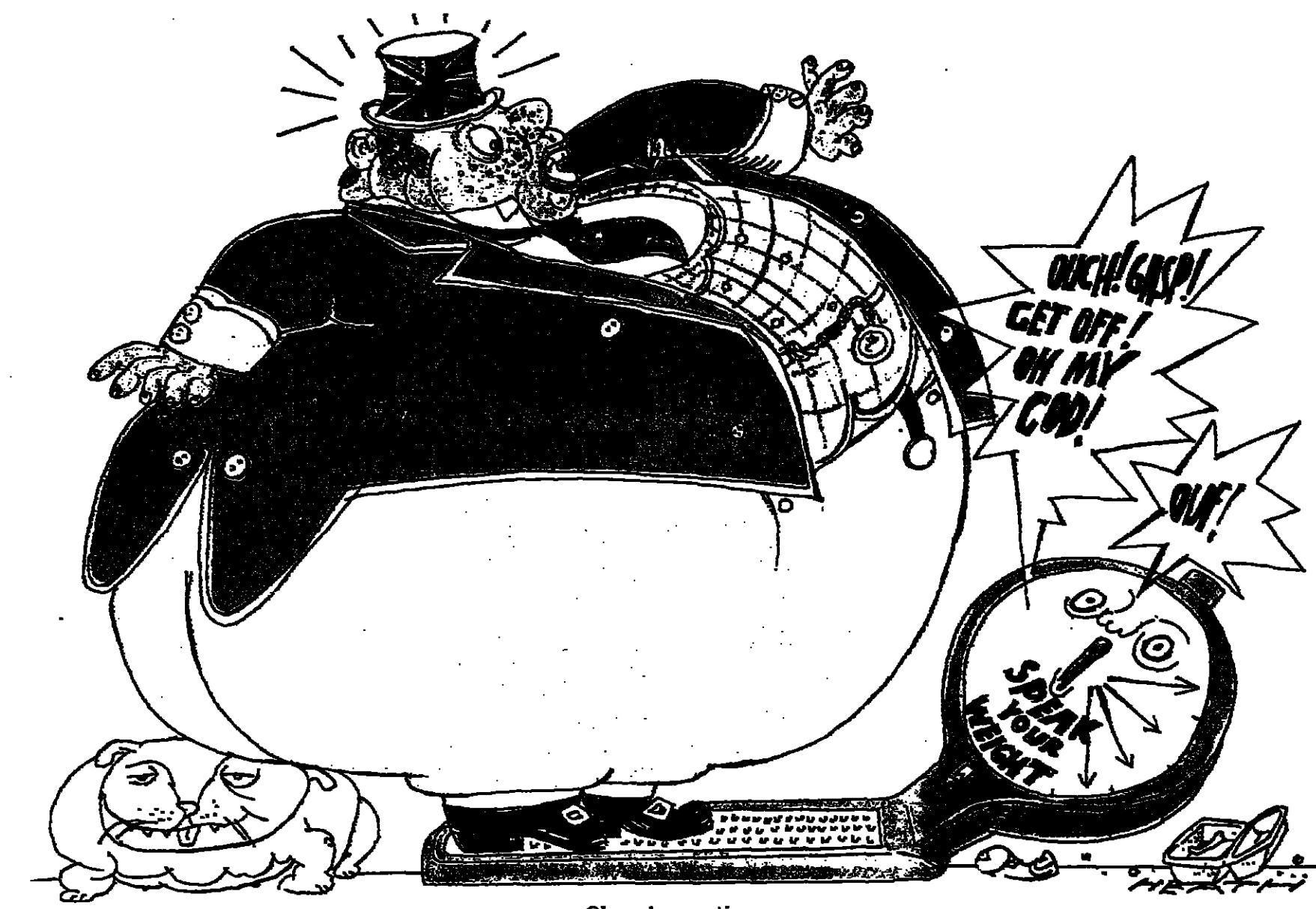
Flight Lieutenant JOHN NICHOL  
Ripon, North Yorkshire

### Cynical ploy of the gun lobby

Sir: The perverse logic of the Shooters' Rights Association and its London PR lobbyists defies belief.

In declaring an intention to proceed against a Scottish police force for alleged negligence over the Dunblane killings (report, 13 August) it is, in effect, seeking financial redress from the force. It follows that since Central Scotland police force is funded from Scottish public revenues, any costs arising either from the legal process or, God forbid, from the imposition of an award, will have to be extracted from all of us living or working in Scotland, including the parents of the children killed and wounded at Dunblane.

I could begin to understand the sense of proceeding against individual senior police officers who ignored advice from those in the lower ranks who felt that Thomas Hamilton was not a fit person to hold a firearms certificate; there might have been some sort of honour in that course, though it would certainly have been a less lucrative option for Guy Savage and his associates. However I would hope our judicial system, Scottish or English, will see



Obese in our time

this cynical ploy for what it is. We are told that there is a £500m firearms industry employing 50,000 people. How much of this relates to non-imported combat handguns, rather than perfectly legitimate guns used for game sports and vermin control? Since a large quantity of handguns are presumably sold to police and military users, and will continue to be sold even if a ban were imposed, it seems unlikely that we are looking at the wholesale destruction of an industry.

DAVID J BLACK  
Roxburghshire

Sir: Last night, after a rare midweek drink with a friend, as my son is holidaying with his grandmother, I couldn't get into my home as several roads were cordoned off by the police because we were told there had been an "armed incident".

Suddenly the quiet, genteel district of Notting Hill Gate where I live had become something from an American cop show - white barrier tape and swarms of police trying to placate an increasing frustrated crowd, some of whom had been waiting for several hours. The anger and fear I felt last night was compounded this morning by the attitudes of those arguing for the rights of individuals who wish to own guns. No, the Dunblane parents are not out for "revenge" (report, 14 August). They are out for every parent who like me was relieved that my child did not have to witness the fear and distress from police and public alike that an "armed incident" can cause.

I also felt ashamed that at the time of the Dunblane massacre I felt the same tragic sympathy that many would have felt. But what a

difference when it is on your own doorstep.

GLORIA MORRISON  
London W71

Sir: Colonel Michael Badger (letter, 13 August) states that "professional users" of firearms are not allowed to take their weapons home. Some of the categories of "personal weapons" that the armed forces have are forbidden to civilians. Moreover, troops' weapons are under 24-hour guard by adequately armed personnel. Is he suggesting that the same should apply to a central store of civilian weapons? That could only be performed by the police.

Shooting competitions take place all over the country. The participants have to travel many miles to participate (and some of these are international and Olympic events). Pistol shooters practise "dry firing" of their weapons in the same way for training as do runners and swimmers for their events, only at home. They have the same dedication as do Olympic athletes. Must we allow one man to stop all of this sport?

J M LEWIS  
Newbury, Buckinghamshire

Sir: The Labour MP Chris Mullin tells us that the so-called shooting lobby is controlled by Tory grandees. Surely some mistake. The majority of handgun owners are skilled working-class people. They have invested a lot of money in their chosen hobby and will not take kindly to the Labour Party confiscating their possessions. Has Labour shot itself in the foot?

DAVID DELANEY  
Leominster, Herefordshire

### Hume's view on frozen embryos

Sir: Frances Kissling (Letters, 13 August) professes to find a contrast between the Vatican and Cardinal Hume on the subject of frozen embryos. In his recent statement the Cardinal explicitly reiterated the Church's teaching that "human life begins at the time of fertilisation, when a human embryo results from the fusion of egg and sperm. It is morally wrong to destroy such a human life even in its earliest stages."

Far from "cool acceptance" of the destruction of frozen embryonic human lives, the Cardinal characterised it as a symptom of the moral mal-de-sac into which acceptance of IVF has led our society. Given a situation in which every proposed exit bristles with moral difficulties, the Cardinal preferred, on balance, the option of allowing embryos to die, once unfrozen - though not carrying out acts of direct destruction. He did not rule out the alternative of "adoption", subject to the Church's further consideration of the significant difficulties involved. No authoritative statement has been issued by Rome expressing a view on these options.

Understanding of embryonic development has evolved in the 16 centuries since St Augustine, and quite radically so in the past 20 years. Contrary to what Ms Kissling implies, recent scientific knowledge tends to confirm rather than undermine the Church's teaching on the beginnings of human life. She refers to "thousands" of spontaneous

abortions. This loss of human life is not as profligate as implied (between 8 per cent and 12 per cent according to reliable studies). But in any case, spontaneous abortion is no more an argument for procured abortions than spontaneous dying is for euthanasia.

Ms Kissling also wonders why the Church has not advocated research in this area. In fact, the Cardinal called for research and funding for alternative means of treating human infertility that would be more successful than IVF and would not involve profligate sacrifice of early human lives.

The Cardinal identified respect for human life as the central drive of the pro-life movement. Presumably "Catholics for a Free Choice" would think it right to restrict the freedom to choose to destroy human life in the womb at some stage prior to birth.

NICHOLAS COOTE  
Assistant General Secretary  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales  
London SW1

to the good article Fisk wrote, yet it is necessary to put it down.

Dr GEORGES JABBOUR  
Former Adviser to the President of the Syrian Republic  
Damascus

### Crusaders

Sir: I read Robert Fisk's article on the Crusaders (1 August) in which he refers to me as having visited him a few months ago. I rang Fisk on Friday 21 April 1995 (16 months ago) and announced to him the appearance of my booklet, *A Message to His Holiness the Pope* and wanted him to cover it. Later in the day a Lebanese friend of Fisk visited me and got the booklet. While this clarification is marginal

the good article Fisk wrote, yet it is necessary to put it down.

Dr GEORGES JABBOUR  
Former Adviser to the President of the Syrian Republic  
Damascus

### Royal economies

Sir: In holding the Japanese imperial family up as a shining example, Peter Martin (letter, 14 August) seems unaware that here considerable reductions in royal staff numbers have already been made since the last war, and now published reports on palace spending show that great economies have been achieved.

Recently the Queen has volunteered to pay income tax (in addition to the indirect taxation to which she was always liable) and has undertaken the burden of the Civil List payments to all her relatives, except her husband and mother. It would be quite unreasonable to begrudge the hard-working and deservedly popular Princess Anne her title of Princess Royal.

JENNIFER MILLER  
London SW15

### Birth of Figaro

Monsieur: In her entertaining piece about tragedy (The DTI University, 14 August) Edith Hall says that the French dramatist Beaumarchais "composed the libretto for Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, *Pas vu*. The libretto was by the amusing old Lorenzo Da Ponte. Beaumarchais' various plays about Figaro and his chums provided the inspiration for this opera plus others by Rossini, Paisiello and Massenet.

Dr DAVID DEVLIN  
Cambridge

### Bad vibes on ultrasound

Sir: I sit down for a moment's quiet read, feeling exhausted, sick and 19 weeks pregnant, after a morning running around after my 16-month tornado. Tomorrow I'm off for my ultrasound scan - modern technology with no side-effects - and what am I faced with in today's *Independent* (13 August)? An exposé on the safety of ultrasound scans.

Great. It appears now that there is a risk to the future speech system of my baby if I go through with it. A small risk, but none the less the seed has been sown. We are currently enjoying our existing son's dalliance with random words like turtle, sky, biscuit, so it seems he has escaped the threat of speech delay after being zapped himself as a 19-week foetus. By going along tomorrow for the scan, now no longer ignorant of its potential dangers, am I knowingly putting the brain of this child at risk?

I don't think anyone will know for sure by tomorrow, so I'll drink the three pints of liquid, hope that my bladder doesn't explode in the waiting room, and pray that bad luck or bad rays don't strike my baby.

L HAMILTON  
Aldbourne, Wiltshire

### Struggle for peace in Angola

Sir: Bob Hughes, Malcolm Harper and others (letter, 12 July) stated that Unita was the main impediment to the peace process in Angola.

The quartering of the Unita soldiers has been slower than expected because of logistical problems which had little to do with Unita. Having surmounted them, Unita has now quartered more than 61,000 men, almost the total number of its soldiers. In July, Unita handed in its heavy weapons.

Blondin Beye, the United Nations special representative in Angola, has commended Unita for doing everything to carry out the Lusaka accords.

We were surprised by the condemnatory sweep of the letter. The authors preferred to remain silent on the obligations of the Angolan government stemming from the accords. The last report of the United Nations Security Council, for instance, called upon the Angolan government to observe the disarmament of the armed civilians; to help in the creation of a unified, integrated army; to promote the observation of human rights; to allow the United Nations to start an independent radio station in Luanda.

Talk about the "quality" of Unita men who were supposed to go to the quartering camps is inappropriate. In the Lusaka Protocol, it is not stipulated that Unita ought only to bring fit combatants. Unita is a guerrilla force begun in 1966 to resist the Portuguese and then to fight MPLA domination. Hoping that its ranks would be filled with thousands of Rambo lookalikes is to expect much.

ANTHONY KANDEYA  
United Kingdom Representative  
The National Union for the Independence of Angola  
(Unita)  
London W7



# And man became God

The artificial creation of human embryos has led to pressing new dilemmas. Peter Popham asks whether scientific innovation has outstripped our social and moral codes

"These," he waved his hand, "are the incubators. And opening an incubator door he showed them racks upon racks of numbered test tubes. The week's supply of ova. Kept," he explained, "at blood heat; whereas the male gametes, and here he opened another door, they have to be kept at 33 instead of 37..."

"Bokanovsky's Process," repeated the Director.

But one of the students was fool enough to ask where the advantage lay.

"My good boy!" The Director wheeled sharply round on him. "Can't you see?" He raised a hand; his expression was solemn. "Bokanovsky's Process is one of the major instruments of social stability!"

Sixty-five years ago, in *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley described a scene that has haunted the century: a ward of human babies in sterile tanks, gently swelling towards their perfect, painless births. In his vision of the future, humanity had mastered the science of genetics, and applied it to perpetuate a society of mindless conformity and leisure.

This week, Huxley's premonition came closer to realisation than ever before: a team of Japanese and British scientists announced that they were experimenting with a hi-tech tank in which a foetus would be able to grow to full term without ever knowing a human womb.

It was only the latest of numerous news stories that have made evident that the future of science fiction speculation is the future no longer: it is already with us. Yet late 20th century reality differs from the visions of dystopians like Huxley in that these sinister possibilities are brought about not through the agency of an omnipotent state, but through the attempts of doctors and scientists, tenuously controlled by government, to add to the sum of human happiness, or reduce the sum of human misery.

Three weeks ago came the news that some 3,000 unclaimed frozen embryos

were, in conformity with the law, to be destroyed, having reached the statutory age limit of five years. The outcry provoked by this slaughter of the innocents was barely stilled before the news emerged that a woman pregnant with twins had been granted what is called a "selective termination" to abort one of them, after claiming that she would be unable to cope with both.

Again, mass moral panic ensued. The anti-abortion campaign had not had such a shot in the arm for years, and its efforts to induce the mother-to-be to bear both twins were only cut short when it emerged that the abortion had already been performed.

Finally there was the tragicomic case of Mandy Allwood, pregnant with octuplets after disregarding her doctor's advice to remain chaste while undergoing fertility treatment, who with her errant partner Paul Hudson has since been strapped to the roller-coaster of

twin merely confirms them in their fundamental faith that we are reaping the moral disaster that States permissiveness sowed.

But it is those who acknowledge the pain of pregnant women appalled by the prospect of becoming mothers, and of infertile couples appalled by the prospect of childlessness, and who believe that if medical science can help them it should be allowed to, who have the moral dilemma - or, rather, multiple dilemmas.

Human agency creates human responsibility. Left to itself, nature is full of failures and mistakes and waste. Miscarriages, the wastage of embryos that fail to take in the womb, handicaps, sterility: all of these are the work of nature to which the blissfully simple response of the pro-lifers is endurance and resignation. But when, 18 years ago, Dr Ralph Steptoe engineered the first test tube baby, Louise

creating numerous embryos, which, if not used, must then be disposed of.

Awareness that their own embryos are dying in the laboratory, while they themselves have yet to conceive, is one of the many traumas experienced by couples undergoing IVF treatment. In order to avoid that trauma many couples opt to have their embryos frozen, giving them the opportunity of trying for one or more further pregnancies in the years ahead. But it is only a way of postponing the problem. Sooner or later they must decide to give them away to another, embryo-less couple, donate them to research or have them destroyed. Given that each embryo contains human life (but not, it can be argued, "personhood"), none of the options is easy.

The mass destruction of embryos in July was due to the fact that an arbitrary five-year limit has been put on the storage of embryos which are unclaimed, and that limit was reached. None of the embryos - the product of some 900 couples - had been claimed.

Does freezing damage embryos?

The jury is out. A recent French report suggested some cell damage; in an experiment with mice, corn from frozen embryos, the mice did fine until mouse old age, when they reportedly deteriorated fast. But another report from Belgium persuaded at least one British fertility clinic that freezing embryos was without risks, and they duly began doing it.

Aside from the question of damage, the freezing option raises the thorny problem of the psychological effect of their origins on children who might, if the British guidelines were to change, be born long after their parents' deaths.

In what sense was the recent abortion of a twin a watershed? So-called "selective termination" or "selective reduction" of foetuses in the womb has been carried out before, but only when multiple embryos implanted during IVF treatment have all taken, and the termination of one or more foetuses is necessary to ensure the wellbeing of the other(s). The case reported two weeks ago was the first time in Britain that a twin had been aborted for social reasons - because the mother felt that she would be unable to cope. A similar case was reported Tuesday, the pregnant woman voicing her fear that her partner would leave her if she went ahead with having twins.

The public's misgivings about the destruction of half a pair of twins for the mother's convenience, misgivings heartily stoked by the pro-life movement, has helped to reopen a more general debate about abortion. The original



Act legalising abortion in 1967 was designed to eliminate backstreet abortions: it was explicitly not meant to sanction abortion on demand. Yet today, it is argued, the liberality of doctors means that an abortion on demand system is what we have: only 2 per cent of the 184,000 abortions carried out in Britain annually for medical reasons.

What are the other reasons that abortion is back in the news?

Last month the Conservative MP Elizabeth Peacock asked a question in the House of Commons about the occurrence here of a method of termination known as "partial birth abortion", which involves withdrawing the foetus until only the head remains inside, then piercing the skull and sucking the brains out until the head collapses. This gruesome-sounding procedure is common in America, but her question failed to elicit any information about its use here. Of course the details of all

abortion procedures make grim reading, but concern about this practice, which Mrs Peacock shares with more than 30 other MPs, has also helped to re-ignite the abortion debate.

Why did Mandy Allwood conceive octuplets?

Because she disregarded her doctor's advice. In the month that she conceived, she was taking a fertility drug and he had evidence that it was proving more effective than intended. Accordingly he instructed her to refrain from sex. But she didn't.

Who decides who gets fertility treatment?

IVF treatment, the last resort for infertile couples who have tried everything else, is said to be increasingly hard to obtain on the National Health Service: patients are required to wait two years or more. As a result, more and more of those desperate for children are undergoing treatment pri-

vately, at a cost of £700-£2,500 per cycle. Success is far from guaranteed: birth rates vary from 0 to 20 per cent, giving a national average of 14 per cent.

But other, less drastic forms of fertility treatment, such as the drug prescribed by Mandy Allwood, are far more widely available. It is the doctor's duty to consider the health of his patients, not their social or financial circumstances; there is no machinery for policing who may or may not be entitled to such treatments.

What has genetic testing got to do with all this?

Medicine's ability to diagnose diseases prenatally is advancing by leaps and bounds: already genetic testing can identify foetuses suffering from conditions such as cystic fibrosis or muscular dystrophy. In the near future many other ailments will be tracked down in the womb. But the only treatment available for such ailments is abortion. As parents are encouraged to adopt an increasingly con-

sumerist attitude to their babies - demanding only perfection, as if they were buying an item in a department store - the idea of the sanctity of life becomes ever hazier.

All the moral dilemmas thrown up by the developments in embryology and connected fields stem from the urge to gratify the desires of women and couples - to have babies, not to have babies, to have more babies, and so on. The embryology revolution is one that liberal society has inspired and smiled on.

The Warnock Commission, which reported in 1984, led to the setting up of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority of 1990, designed to regulate these issues. The fact that we are in a moral firestorm suggests that its remit has been outstripped by science. The challenge now for those who endorse liberal society's achievements in reducing suffering and increasing the sum of happiness is to find legislative solutions for these new dilemmas.

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## Forgotten your car number? Make it up

I can remember the number of the very first car I owned, a Renault Dauphine called RUN 169, but I cannot remember the number of any car I have ever had subsequently.

That includes the one I have got at the moment. Which has sometimes been embarrassing when I have been filling in registration forms at hotels or simply reporting to places with private car parks. "Car registration number?", says the form sweetly or the desk man roughly, and I sweat with humiliation. You can't say "It's G something, I think," because that is plumbing the depths of whatever the opposite of machismo is. Usually I wink and smile and say, "I'll just go and have a look," and pop outside to have a look, and they smile when I come back, because they cannot imagine that I am possibly popping outside to have a look and think I must be joking.

But I am not. Now, however, I have learnt to remember my car number, because it has been stolen from me here in Edinburgh, and I had to memorise it before I reported it to the police. I had parked the car outside the Plesance, where I am performing, and when I left it it had two number plates and when I came back it only had one. The front number plate had gone. It's strange how naked a car looks without a number on the front. Or perhaps it makes it look as if it is wearing a mask.

"It's almost certainly illegal to drive around without a number plate," my wife said. "We are almost certainly breaking some regulation every time we go out in a car," I said.

"True," she said. "But seldom as obviously as by driving around without a number plate."

True. So the next morning I got up, fed the meter and approached a friendly traffic warden. At least, he was friendly when it became clear I wasn't either going to plead or argue with him.

"I've had my front number plate nicked," I said. "What should I do?"

He had no idea. He talked



Miles Kingston

into the little phone on his shoulder to the boss. "There's a fellow here had his number plate stolen. What should he do? Uh huh ... Aye ... right..."

He turned to me. "Report to the West End police station in Torphichen Place."

When a Scotsman says "Torphichen", it comes out as a cloud of saliva, but eventually I got him to write it down and off I went to the West End police station, which is not half as grand as it sounds - in fact, all police stations seem to acquire a dusty brown air of resignation and sloth from their birth, and this one was no different.

"Took the number plate and left the car, did they?" said the policeman. "You were lucky."

"But why would anyone want to steal a number plate?"

"Well, these days a lot of cars are stolen to order, then they have to get a number plate to go with it. What's the number of your car?"

I resisted the urge to say that I would pop out and have a look. In fact, to guard against this I had already written the number down on my hand. I sneaked a look.

"It's G357 UAM."

I wasn't quite sure of this, as the way I had written the G looked like a C, but it sounded near enough, and I thought a C reg car would probably be too old. (You can tell how much I know about cars.) "Right," said the friendly policeman, waving a theft report form at me. "Take this and if anyone stops you, show them this. That'll get you on your way again. We'll be in touch if we find a stolen car with your number."

What he didn't say was whether or even where I should buy a new one. I don't know

where you should go in Edinburgh to get car number plates. What I do know is that in the print shop round the corner from me they sell self-adhesive letters of just the right size and typeface for a number plate, so as a temporary measure I marched in and said that I wanted a G and a 3 and a 5 and a 7 and a U and an A and an M. Already I was beginning to memorise my number.

"Sorry," said the man. "We've got the rest, but we're out of the letter A."

After a little debate I bought a V and a hyphen, so that I could turn the V upside down and stick the hyphen across to convert it into an A. Seconds later I was kneeling in front of my car, peeling the backing off letters, getting them stuck on my hand, peeling them off my hand and sticking them on to my car. I now have the only car in Edinburgh with paper letters on the front which look as if they had been arranged by a child during her first day at kindergarten. But at least I can remember the number of my car.



# the commentators

Tony Blair is a practising Christian," whined Mr Peter Mandelson in the *Evening Standard*. "Whatever you think of his political views, to portray him as the Devil is a crass, clumsy move." "Mr Blair is depicted flashing his characteristically winning smile," reported the *Daily Telegraph*, "but his eyes have been replaced by those of a demonic alien." "Villifying members of other political parties is a puerile exercise," thundered the Bishop of Oxford, "and when that villifying draws on satanic imagery..."

Whoa, whoa there, hang on just a minute. What is all this baloney about the Devil? The "They party's poster of Mr Blair looking rather dashing in a mask has, as far as I can see, no connection whatever with the Horned One. It is provenance is perfectly obvious to all - all that, is, who have seen the Disney *Hunchback of Notre Dame*. They will have seen Mr Blair's lovely features - complete with mask - on a harlequin character called Clopin, a crazed all-singing, all-dancing



## John WALSH

### Who was that masked man? Certainly not Labour's Lucifer, more a groovy Disney outlaw

Master of the Revels who rattle-brains through the streets inviting the locals to feats of misbehaviour. He is, it transpires, leader of the groovy outlaws at a Bohemian nightclub called the Cave of Miracles.

He is, in other words, an absolutely modern hero - driven, hedonistic and on the side of right. And if there's any doubt about Maurice Saatchi's subversive intentions in this portraying the leader of the Opposition, just look at Clopin's sidekick, the orthopaedically challenged Quasimodo. Am I dreaming or are we looking at

the features of Mr John Prescott, fresh from scoffing fish and chips on the Cleethorpes strand?

The Rev Donald Reeves, Rector of St James's, Piccadilly, is something of a caution. Along with being the living embodiment of hyper-liberal Christianity, apart from having opened his gloriously-sited London church to every brand of New Age crystal-fancying weirdity and allowed market stalls and vendors to flourish in the annex as if virtually begging some modern-day Christ to wade in

and evict them, aside from setting up his church's commercial concerns as a trading company called "St James's PCC" - together with all these bold ventures, Mr Reeves has developed a nice line in explanatory rhetoric.

I have before me a newsletter from Charlbury with Shortampton in rural Oxfordshire, where the rector has run the local Coffeehouse for a year, with his friend Peter Pelz. It has, Reeves tells us, drawn "mild, friendly curiosity as to why a priest should be running a business". Very understandable. But instead of answering the parishioners' curiosity by saying "To make a profit", or "Because I am a colonial bread-head", Reeves retreats behind a blizzard of eugenics. "The Eucharist has come to mean so much more to me since my immersion in business," he trills. "The bread and wine are not just expressions of the bounty of God, they reflect different ways of production, distribution and exchange. The bread stands also for our exploitation of nature, the bitterness of competition, for

business that makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. The wine..." But you get the picture. It strikes me as mastery the way Mr Reeves justifies his capitalist endeavours by saying they encourage him to reflect on how awful they are...

A friend has returned from his summer holidays in the States, positively fizzing with excitement. One moment he was stuck in the depths of New Hampshire, expecting little in the way of fun and excitement. Then he heard an announcement on the car radio and rushed to the Hampton Beach Casino ("the Great Yarmouth of New

England", apparently) to catch the 30th anniversary concert by The Monkees, the ersatz but not unappealing Sixties popsters created by television executives to cash in on the popularity of The Beatles. My friend watched entranced as the ageing pranksters bounced through "A Little Bit Me, A Little Bit You" and "Last Train to Clarksville" and their big hit, "I'm a Believer". He looked at what the ravages of time had done to Davy Jones, the Shortarse English one, and Micky Dolenz, the Wacky one who was in *Grease* Boy, and Peter Tork the Dim-witted drummer, and... But there was no sign of the fourth, the



And then there were three - the Monkees

Woolly Hatted one, aka Mike Nesmith. Why wasn't he there? My friend asked some nearby fans and heard the damndest thing. I haven't been able to check its veracity, so it remains in the realm of bizarre claims: Mike Nesmith, they said, is simply too rich to have to work; he's been that way ever since his mother invented Tippi-Ex. There now. Who says you can't learn anything from diary columns?

Followers of the Tube dispute will have been weighing up all the arguments and counter-claims advanced by London Transport and Aslef: pay percentages below the inflation rate, cuts in working hours, all that. But a completely original factor was

introduced this week by Bob Crewe, assistant general secretary of the RMT. At a press conference broadcast on Carlton's *London Tonight*, Mr Crewe conceded that the shorter working period offered by LT was indeed an attractive prospect, but "Having more time off, my members will actually need more finance for leisure activities," and so they couldn't accept a pay cut. Brilliant, eh? Give us more time off, it argues, and you'll have to pay us more to subsidise it.

There was a time when "leisure" simply meant "not working", and suggested a period of peace and quiet, a stroll in the bosom of nature, a time of reflection, conversation, philosophical musings, even romance - none of them (except perhaps the last-named) activities that involved any expenditure at all. Mr Crewe's ingenious suggestion that every second of one's leisure time should be spent in exorbitantly-priced "activities" suggests a man who has spent too long yanking one-arm bandits in places called "Playland" and "Crystal Rooms".



Disney time: John Prescott and Tony Blair, obviously

# The killing of Fr Gray

### The violent death of a priest outside his church has broken another taboo. We are all diminished by it, argues Paul Valley

Another death, another boundary. This time it is a vicar who has died at the hands of a violent man. And so we add the blood of a priest to that of the London headmaster, Philip Lawrence, and the Dublin journalist, Veronica Guerin, in the catalogue of those who have died in recent times while simply doing their jobs.

With each it seems a new taboo is broken. There was a time in public imagination when non-domestic murder was something was restricted to gangland culture; our fear was contained by the supposition that, from the Kays to the Mafia or the modern warring drug-dealers, "they only killed their own kind". No longer. Our age has become so inured to the casualness of violent death that the average killing of a man in a pub brawl rates only a paragraph in the national newspapers, if it makes the news at all.

And yet there is still something profoundly shocking about certain deaths. The teacher is stabbed during his attempt to impart moral correction. The journalist is shot while fearlessly seeking after the truth. And now the priest dies in a pool of his own blood, while making himself available, with great vulnerability, to the desecrated and rejected.

They were people of service, doing their jobs - and in an exemplary manner - so that their deaths seem more than a

tragedy. They are a violation of some kind of trust, a compact whereby society brands some actions more than perpetually forbidden but marks them, in some unwritten way, as taboo. They break the limits that lead to chaos. Like the death of the children of Dunblane or a toddler such as James Bulger - open, trusting, innocent and epitomising everything we hold sacred about childhood - they strike at what society cherishes at its centre, where it needs to be most secure.

In part it is that our taboo against violence in general has been eroded. But such profanities strike at our hearts and reinforce a sense that older, better values are in terrifying collision with a new nihilism. Statistics tell us that the world is no more violent a place today than it was in previous eras; our children are statistically as safe now as they have ever been. And throughout history terrible crimes have always happened.

Yet there is more to this than moral panic. When a nurse is attacked on a ward, or a doctor on his or her rounds, or an aid worker is killed in a far-off place, our sense of shock

is augmented by one of moral outrage. That someone who is not taking risks for personal gain, nor even is just a casual bystander, but who is there to help can be obliterated for no apparent reason underscores our sense of pointlessness.

The killing of a journalist is a taboo long shattered in many parts of the world. Mobsters in the United States, faction-leaders in Bosnia, drug-dealers and even governments in Latin America have wilfully murdered reporters in an attempt to silence them. But taboos are culturally specific. It has not happened in Britain and Ireland, even in the face of decades of killing in Ulster, so the gunning down of Veronica Guerin shocked both nations.

In a similar way there is nothing new about the murder of priests. Yet from Thomas à Becket onwards the killing of clerics has most often been bound up with politics or political symbolism. Men like Oscar Romero may have been motivated entirely by the gospel, but his stand in El Salvador brought him into conflict with the vested interests of the rich and powerful. The bishop blown up in Algeria recently was regarded by his Islamic assassins not as a culpable individual but as a symbol of the cultural and economic imperialism of the West.

The only killing of a clergyman in Britain in recent times was that of an elderly Catholic priest hit on the head at his home by burglars in Southwark a couple of years ago. But



Schoolchildren pay their respects to the murdered headmaster Philip Lawrence: some deaths seem more shocking than others

Fr Christopher Gray was not killed merely for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was killed in the mundane exercise of his ministry which was to live alongside the people who are most in need of help.

The Church of England's decision to maintain a presence in every parish in the country means that often in inner-city areas the only professional actually living in the area is the Anglican minister. The destitute, the desperate and the dangerous therefore stream to the presbytery door making life for the minister extremely trying. And yet the church is the one place where people like that can go when everyone else has rejected them.

The state deals with such

people from behind the safety of the glass-sheeted social security desk. It is part of our society's claim to civilised values that there are still men like Christopher Gray whose vocation is to deal face to face with the wimpy and drug addicts, some of whom can be extremely violent, and attempt to comfort them with little more than a sandwich, a cup of tea and a chat.

Clergymen are not trained to do this. It is a skill they pick up in their early years as curates. Most priests become quite hard-headed about establishing the boundaries of such ministry. But if some, especially the younger and more idealistic, do not find it easy to draw the line under an unsatisfactory encounter, that only reflects the extent of the sacrifice such a

calling involves. In the case of Christopher Gray - a personable young man with a brilliant academic background and great talent as a musician and linguist - it appears to have cost him his life.

No wonder David Shepherd, the Bishop of Liverpool, yesterday described the killing of Fr Gray as "an event of sheer evil". Part of the nature of evil is that it is incomprehensible. It exists in some region beyond rational thought, where no explanation is possible.

Of course, we attempt explanations. "If we ban guns our children's lives will not have been lost in vain," say the parents of the murdered children of Dunblane. But it is a desperate attempt to barter with

the unnegotiable, to make some inroads into the meaninglessness and somehow make it understandable.

The killing of anyone is evil, but where that person is working for good that evil is particularly exaggerated. It is in only cases like that of Christopher

Gray that we seem to rediscover our ability, and our need, to be shocked. But with each shattered taboo the boundaries for that outrage recede. The next incident will seem somehow marginally less shocking. And we are all diminished by that.

## THE CENTRAL FACTS FROM THE COURSES YOU ALWAYS MEANT TO TAKE, IN 25 LECTURES

It can be a grim business, the academic study of comedy. Students who are made to read Freud on jokes and laughter may never smile again. For a start, it is depressingly difficult to make any true generalisations on the subject. George Bernard Shaw offered: "the popular definition of tragedy is heavy drama in which everyone is killed in the last act; comedy being light drama, in which everyone is married in the last act."

But this shot at definition is even less true of comedy than it is of tragedy. It is not even true of Aristophanes - the earliest comic playwright offered: "the popular definition of tragedy is heavy drama in which everyone is killed in the last act; comedy being light drama, in which everyone is married in the last act."


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sacred, no family too royal, no poet too laureate, no politician too major to escape the bad taste and squishy dung-balls of Aristophanes.


But things changed from this fantastical interference in the contemporary world to the relatively detached gentility of the so-called New Comedy. Athens lost power and confidence, audiences became more prudish and sentimental. Less than 100 years later, the plays called "comedy", exemplified by Menander, were so different that you might wonder why they had the same name. Rich old men are hoodwinked by cheeky slaves, tarted here and found, and boy marries girl in the end. When the Romans came along, they found this same old comedy ready-made, and took it over into their language, which was still emerging. And so we still have Latin plays by Plautus and Terence (roughly 220-150 BC).

There was not much theatre in the Middle Ages, which was not perhaps the most amusing of eras to be in. "Comedy" came to mean any story with a reassuring ending - hence Dante's *Divine Comedy*, much of it set among the agonies of hell. With the new age of the Renaissance, Roman comedy sprouted a whole family of transforma-



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tions - the commedia dell'arte in Italy, Lope de Vega and co in Spain, Molière in France, and so on. "Comedian" came to mean any actor, and so the Comédie-Française can put on innumerable tragedies. Shakespeare, however, broke down the boundaries of the genre irreparably. *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, is described as a "Comical History"; and if *Twelfth Night* and *Cressida* is, as claimed, a comedy, then it is a pretty sour one. It is hardly surprising that old Polonius in Hamlet goes on about "tragical-comical-historical-pastoral."

Yet the comedy of manners and foibles lived on. It perpetuated and endlessly varied its cast of cuckolded husbands, frisky widows, ingenious servants, quack doctors and priests, old retainers, swaggering officers... and in the end, "anyone for a wedding?"

In this century the label of "comedy" has often been applied with a kind of dark irony by such disturbers of the peace of mind as Durrenmat, Beckett, Ionesco and Pinter. Lately on the home front, in this post-90s era, there has, however, been a return to the old Aristophanic kind of comedy, at least in radio and TV and stand-up routines, if not so much in the theatre (yet). Zany lunacies, cavorting

sequences, grossness, ridicule of the great and the bad, especially politicians, parody of every art-form and sacred cow - only the leather phallus is missing. Once again the contemporary world is the shit and comedy is the fun.

Comedy refuses to stand still (or long enough for you to inspect it under the microscope). And if you tear a bit off for close examination, it looks pretty damn unfunny (as Freud, Bergson, Bakhtin and others have so amply demonstrated). The most important general point is that it is not enough to say that comedy is simply any performance that aims to make people laugh. All sorts of buffoonery, and some sorts of sadism or of sad failure, can make people laugh; and yet they are an insult to the name of comedy.

What all comedy does have to do is to use laughter as its access to the hearts and minds of its audience; the desire for laughter is the hunger that comedy caters for. This feast is made possible through laughter, and would be impossible without it. But the laughter is the appetite, not the meal itself, in the hands of an Aristophanes or Molière or Synge or Chaplin: laughing matters can be serious food for thought.

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Barclays Bank PLC	12.9%	£113.35	£6,580.90	£237.45
National Westminster Bank plc	14.9%	£116.56	£6,554.68	£288.77

The rates quoted are for new customers. Existing customers may be eligible for a different rate. Rates are correct as at 07.08.96.

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# Foul, abusive and embarrassing language — it's par for the course on the floor of Liffe

NIC CICUTTI

A top trader on the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange, the biggest derivatives exchange in Europe, has been fined for using "foul, abusive and embarrassing" language against a member of staff.

Colin "Ned" Kelly, who works at one of Liffe's most prestigious firms, Hills Independent Traders, was fined £500 for abusing one of the Exchange's floor-based "observers".

About 18 months ago Mr Kelly, who is reputed to earn more than £250,000 a year, was the subject of a complaint that he abused a black trader. It was alleged that he jumped up and down, imitating a baboon and making monkey noises at the trader.

Colleagues of Mr Kelly said the fine, levied in the past month or so and notified on the Exchange's disciplinary noticeboard, was notable for its relative severity.

Each month, a number of fines of £50 or more are levied against Liffe's young traders for a range of offences, including swearing, jostling, flicking trading cards at each other, moving out of their allotted positions, even fighting in the trading floor's pits, where business activity takes place daily.

Mr Kelly's behaviour was considered graver by Liffe's disciplinary body because the person he abused was one of its officials rather than a colleague.

Traders suggested the pattern of fines levied by the Exchange is symptomatic of an aggressive, racist culture pervasive among Liffe's traders, many of them young men who have come on to the trading floor straight

from school. The culture of aggressive "work and play" that prevails at Liffe is said to be fostered by intense competition in the pits, where trading is carried out by hundreds of people in "open outcry", striking deals by traditional face-to-face methods.

"We are not all like this, but there are some serious animals down there," one trader said. "There are some people who you would not like to meet in a pub at 10.30pm, after they have had a few drinks."

In one incident last year, trouble among traders flared after a meal in a private dining

**'Sure there are people who will scream and shout. This is a high-testosterone business'**

room at one of London's most exclusive restaurants turned into an ugly fracas in which the police were called, although no criminal charges were brought.

On another occasion, a trader's night out in a curry house in the Brick Lane area of east London ended in a fight when, in a case of mistaken identity, local Bengali youths believed the trader was a member of a neo-Nazi organisation.

In September, sniffer dogs were brought out to the trading floor after a young trader was caught with cannabis. Other traders said that while spot searches had reduced the likelihood of drugs being discov-

ered, the use of cocaine and "speed", or amphetamine sulphate, was still relatively common among traders.

One trader who no longer works in the pit but deals by telephone, said: "You have to remember that we are talking about people who may be trading on their own behalf and could be losing several thousands of pounds in a matter of minutes. It's hardly surprising that in the heat of the moment they could scream abuse at each other."

A trader who has been at Liffe for some 18 months, said: "If you are black you will get called nigger, jungle bunny or things like that. Some guys will just have a go. Racism should not be a thing that happens but when people get put together in a stressful environment it does go on."

Another trader, a member of the Liffe board, who refused to be named, said: "Sure, there are some people who will scream and shout. But this is a high-testosterone business, with those working in it aged between 18 and 30. Some are even younger. The things they get up to are typical of your average working-class kid."

"I can honestly say that things like racism don't go on here. I've got an Asian and a West Indian guy working for me and they don't get any abuse."

"There might be the odd word, like if you have a certain type of hair they might call you Curly. But if you were balding, you might be called Skull. It is part of banter and will come from your own colleagues, not from other firms."

While up to 30 per cent of those on the Liffe floor are now women, most carry out back-of-



Fever pitch: Colin "Ned" Kelly (circled) has been fined £500 for unruly behaviour against an official observer on the Liffe trading floor

face functions or are "yellow-jackets", runners between traders and their firm's box. The Exchange said yesterday that it does not keep records of people from ethnic minorities who work on the floor.

Karin Forsake, director of operations and surveillance at Liffe, yesterday refused to give

details of any fine levied on Kelly, saying it was not the Exchange's practice to announce disciplinary action taken against members. Mr Kelly could not be contacted for comment.

Steve Hills, joint managing director of Hills Independent Traders and also a member of the Liffe board, confirmed yes-

terday that Mr Kelly had been fined by the Exchange.

"One of the things that highlight a good trader is 'pit awareness', where you are aware of what is happening 20 feet away even when everyone around you is shouting their heads off," Mr Hills said.

"Colin is tall and very broad

and when he shouts, I can sometimes hear him 20 yards away in my box, above all the other shouting."

"I think Colin was upset that one of his trades was not heard and he may have felt that he was being ignored. He moved across the other side of the pit [to make the trade] and was then asked

[by an 'observer'] to get back. "He may have shouted at the official a bit. Colin now accepts that what he did was wrong and that whatever happens you do not have a go at the referee." Mr Hills said he backed Liffe's get-tough policy against traders, particularly in cases of abuse of officials.

## Ofgas delays final pricing formula

CHRIS GODSMARK  
Business Correspondent

The gas industry regulator, Ofgas, is to wait another week before releasing its controversial final price formula for the British Gas pipeline business, TransCo. Sources within British Gas suggested the differences between the two sides over the price controls remained unbridgeable, and TransCo employees were now starting lengthy and complex task of preparing for a referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Ofgas said the final proposals, which are the subject of one of the most intense arguments ever between a regulator and privatised utility, will be unveiled next Wednesday. The final formula was originally due at the end of July but was delayed until "mid-August".

It is believed British Gas was under the impression that

publication would take place today, and interpreted yesterday's announcement of a final date as a further delay.

An Ofgas spokesman insisted the regulator, Clare Spottiswoode, who returned from a fortnight's holiday on Monday, "will only put something out when she is good and ready." He continued: "this weekend will give us time to reflect over the proposals".

British Gas was yesterday playing down suggestions that a compromise was impossible. But a source said TransCo's "formula review team", which has been working for months on the price controls, was preparing to go to the Monopolies Commission. "We've done an MMC inquiry before [in 1993] and we are getting ready again. It is our understanding that Ofgas is starting to put together their case for the MMC as well," the source said.

Ofgas has proposed a re-

duction in the size of TransCo's asset base from around £17bn to between £9bn and £11bn, on which it will be allowed to earn a rate of return. The change would cut its revenues from next April by 20 per cent to £8 per cent, equivalent to a 28 cut off the average domestic bill. British Gas has warned this would mean a reduction in its revenues of up to £850m, which could only be achieved by cutting up to 10,000 jobs and putting service levels at risk.

British Gas's deputy chairman, Philip Rogerson, had a long meeting with Ms Spottiswoode on Monday night, but neither side is thought to have backed down on the fundamental sticking points. The meeting was understood to have been in the form of a discussion, rather than a negotiation on any of the basic issues.

Yesterday the Gas Consumers' Council urged the regulator not to back down.

## Granada earmarks media partners for expansion

MATHEW HORSMAN  
Media Editor

Granada Media Group, part of Gerry Robinson's hotels and leisure conglomerate, has earmarked as many as six US joint-venture partners to co-develop television programmes for sale around the world, as a step towards expanding its international media business.

The company is also in talks with at least two UK cable operators - Nynex CableComms and Telewest Communications - about developing "City TV" cable channels in Manchester and Liverpool.

The news emerged yesterday as the group, headed by Duncan Lewis, the former boss of telephone group Mercury, unveiled an across-the-board management restructuring aimed at streamlining operations in the UK and increasing opportunities abroad and at home.

"We looked at what other global companies are doing in the sector, and considered

where we wanted to be in three years' time," Mr Lewis said. "The new structure should strengthen our capabilities."

At the core of the restructuring is a split between broadcasting and production, aimed at giving the production side greater freedom to supply programmes to other broadcasters. A new division, dubbed Granada Vision, will explore markets outside the company's core ITV businesses - London Weekend Television and Granada, the ITV franchise for the North-west.

The newly formed Granada Vision will be headed by David Liddell, while Granada International Productions, which will focus on production, particularly for ITV, will be jointly run by Jules Burns and Andrea Womersley. All three executives were previously in senior positions at Granada.

An outside appointment is to be made within a few weeks to head Granada Vision, which will also be responsible for the group's joint venture with

BSkyB to launch satellite services later this year.

The restructuring is the latest in a series of moves by ITV companies to prepare for the onset of multi-channel television, and follows similar changes at Michael Green's Carlton and Lord Hollick's United News & Media, which owns the Anglia and Meridian regional ITV franchises.

In his first interview since arriving at Granada Media Group earlier this year, Mr Lewis stressed the changes would not lead to job losses, and said the regional nature of the company's two franchises would not be jeopardised. "We are keeping separate production operations for both Granada and LWT."

The changes suggest Granada will attempt to exploit overseas markets for its range of drama, comedy and entertainment programming. But there will be a special emphasis on local programming which could include community television channels for Manchester and



Duncan Lewis: The media group is being restructured

Liverpool, in league with local cable operators.

Mr Lewis said that Granada was still not convinced about the prospects for digital terrestrial television in the UK. "We aren't yet sure the numbers really work," he said. Granada will support the rest of the ITV sector in taking up the Government's offer of space on the digital spectrum for the "simulcasting" of existing ITV programming.

## BICC falls into the red

MAGNUS GRIMOND

BICC, the cables, construction and property group, dived into the red in the first half of 1996, hit by new restructuring charges, write-offs and further provisions at its Balfour Beatty contracting subsidiary.

The group yesterday unveiled further plans to restructure KWO, its German cable making division, just nine months after a previous widespread shake-up of the business. Another 170 jobs are to go in Germany, taking the workforce down to 670 compared with 1,250 a year ago.

Chief executive Alan Jones said the previous world-wide rationalisation programme was beginning to contribute improved results. "The German cable market has, however, shown no signs of improvement in the first half of 1996 and, although losses in KWO in the first half-year were much reduced, it has been necessary to give further consideration to the group's position in that market."

After the closure of an operation making electric cable for the construction industry, BICC's operations in Germany will in future be focused on two units making telecommunications and power utility cables. The £25m cost, of which £9m will be in cash, formed part of a £65m exceptional charge announced yesterday. The provision, which comes after a £127m charge last year, turned profits of £66m into a loss of £2m in the six months to 29 June. BICC is holding the interim dividend at 4p.

Despite a 5p rise in the shares to 320p yesterday, the figures disappointed some analysts, who cut full-year forecasts.

Investment Column, page 18

## Former taxman makes a killing with fantasy war games

NIGEL COPE

A former tax inspector who runs his business from a Portakabin in Nottinghamshire is proving to be one of the winners in the cut-throat toys and hobbies industry of the 1990s.

In a market increasingly dominated by computer games, Tom Kirby's Games Workshop is recording booming sales and profits. Operating as both a manufacturer and retailer, the company produces a range of

fantasy war games based on the Warhammer theme.

While the UK and US toy markets are seeing sales volume down by 5 per cent year-on-year, Games Workshop yesterday reported a 47 per cent increase in profits, making £9m on sales 40 per cent higher at £45m.

The company opened 25 new shops last year, taking the total to 118 world-wide. Its monthly magazine, *White Dwarf*, which gives users tips on new game

strategy, is selling 100,000 copies a month.

Updated versions of the miniature toy armies are launched regularly and shipped from the factory next to the Portakabin. Teenage boys and older generations rush to snap up the additions to armies with names like Orks and Goblins, Dark Elves and Imperial Guard.

Devotees often play the warrior board games for days, or even weeks. A new game called *Warhammer Battle* is planned for September. Mr Kirby, a Yorkshireman who even addresses City bankers wearing jeans and a T-shirt, says the success of the company should come as no surprise.

"I know we make toy soldiers but we quite definitely do not see ourselves as being in the toy market. We are dealing with enthusiasts who love their hobbies. In our shops we teach people how to play the games and how to paint the characters. It becomes an obsession. It's com-

pletely different to buying a few toys and then chucking them away."

He likens Games Workshop to the hobby companies of the 1950s such as Hornby and Meccano. "Kids' teens is when they get really interested in certain things. Some stay with us for just a few years, others stay for life. We always say that our main competition is sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll. People go to college and they find other things."

Games Workshop is already looking for new markets to explore. It has started an operation in Hong Kong and has yet to sell its games in Japan, where Mr Kirby feels they will be popular.

The company also has operations in Europe, where sales rose by 69 per cent last year, Australia and the US. In America the company has switched to direct selling after struggling to find suitable distributors. The company has proved

## SIB to seek changes at metal exchange

The Securities and Investment Board, the City regulator, will today recommend changes in trading practices at the London Metal Exchange in the wake of the Sumitomo copper scandal.

The SIB review began after it emerged in June that Japan's Sumitomo Corporation had run up losses of £1.8bn (£1.2bn) in unauthorised copper deals. Sumitomo, which is one of the world's largest copper dealers, blamed its chief trader, Yasuo Hamanaka, who was promptly sacked.

The news led to volatile copper trading on the LME, where

the majority of trades take place. The SIB review covers metals and associated derivatives traded both on the LME and over the counter.

The SIB's investigation into Sumitomo and the LME was conducted in tandem with the Serious Fraud Office and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission of the US. Last week the SFO raided the English homes of two directors of Winchester Commodities, a metal trader.

Sumitomo expects that its own investigation will be completed within six months.

STOCK MARKETS					
FT-SE 100	Dow Jones	Nikkei	1996 High	1996 Low	YTD % Chg
3830.30	4351.90	19172.80	3857.10	3632.30	4.08
3830.30	4351.90	19172.80	3857.10	3632.30	3.48
3830.30	4351.90	19172.80	3857.10	3632.30	3.95
3830.30	4351.90	19172.80	3857.10	3632.30	3.12
3830.30	4351.90	19172.80	3857.10	3632.30	3.89
3830.30	4351.90	19172.80	3857.10	3632.30	2.21
3830.30	4351.90	19172.80	3857.10	3632.30	0.78
3830.30	4351.90	19172.80	3857.10	3632.30	3.44
3830.30	4351.90	19172.80	3857.10	3632.30	1.80

INTEREST RATES					
Short sterling	UK medium gilt	US long bond	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month
5.72	6.13	7.83	5.19	7.95	8.25
5.72	6.13	7.83	5.19	7.95	8.25
5.72	6.13	7.83	5.19	7.95	8.25
5.72	6.13	7.83	5.19	7.95	8.25
5.72	6.13	7.83	5.19	7.95	8.25
5.72	6.13	7.83	5.19	7.95	8.25
5.72	6.13	7.83	5.19	7.95	8.25
5.72	6.13	7.83	5.19	7.95	8.25

CURRENCIES					
£/\$	£/DM	£/¥	Yesterday	Today's chg	Year Ago
1.5505	0.6450	0.0062	1.5524	0.0019	0.6442
1.5505	0.6450	0.0062	1.5524	0.0019	0.6442
1.5505	0.6450	0.0062	1.5524	0.0019	0.6442
1.5505	0.6450	0.0062	1.5524	0.0019	0.6442
1.5505	0.6450	0.0062	1.5524	0.0019	0.6442
1.5505	0.6450	0.0062	1.5524	0.0019	0.6442
1.5505	0.6450	0.0062	1.5524	0.0019	0.6442
1.5505	0.6450	0.0062	1.5524	0.0019	0.6442

OTHER INDICATORS					
Oil Brent	Gold	Base Rates	15 Aug	16 Aug	17 Aug
20.73	385.50	5.75pc	15.75	15.75	15.75
20.73	385.50	5.75pc	15.75	15.75	15.75
20.73	385.50	5.75pc	15.75	15.75	15.75
20.73	385.50	5.75pc	15.75	15.75	15.75
20.73	385.50	5.75pc	15.75	15.75	15.75
20.73	385.50	5.75pc	15.75	15.75	15.75
20.73	385.50	5.75pc	15.75	15.75	15.75
20.73	385.50	5.75pc	15.75	15.75	15.75
20.73	385.50	5.75pc	15.75	15.75	15.75

مكتبة الامم المتحدة





COMMENT

There is a lot wrong with Cadbury and Greenbury, but they are an honest attempt to deal with past abuse, an attempt to safeguard legitimate shareholder and public interest. They are not attempts to manage by prescription, and Sir Stanley knows it

## Dixons chairman tries to divert the attention

Sir Stanley Kalms, chairman of Dixons, has always been a businessman who speaks his mind. Yesterday he was at it on three fronts, fulminating against Tony Blair and Brussels in the *Daily Mail*, and castigating Cadbury-style corporate governance in his annual report. The three things might to most of us seem largely unrelated, but for Sir Stanley they plainly carry a common theme. He hates regulation in all its various guises. To him all three seem to stand for the same thing - binding business and management within a highly restrictive framework of rules, regulations and practices.

Sir Stanley is unimpressed by New Labour. He thinks that fundamentally the party hasn't changed at all and he believes Mr Blair's commitment to a minimum wage and the Social Chapter poses a serious threat to business. Likewise, he doesn't believe in Cadbury and Greenbury, or as he put it in the Dixons annual report, "management by prescription". Sir Stanley doesn't speak for all businessmen, naturally, but his views are representative of a fair number. Business is still highly suspicious of Labour, as is the City too. The old mistrust hasn't gone and as we approach the election, it will increase.

But Sir Stanley, though he makes good points, is wrong about the perils of regulation. Free markets don't work without rules and regulations to curb abuse. To that must also be added that market economies will be seen to have failed without some form of safety net to catch the socially disadvantaged.

Britain's opt-out from the Social Chapter and its refusal to impose a minimum wage gives some businesses in Britain a very significant competitive advantage over those in countries that have taken these things on board. If Sir Stanley really believes that Europe is for long going to allow Britain to have all the benefits of the EU without having to abide by any of its social disciplines, then he is being naive.

The same is true of the capital markets where Sir Stanley seems to want the advantages without conforming to any of the rules. There is a lot wrong with Cadbury and Greenbury, but what and all, they are an honest attempt to deal with past abuse, an attempt to safeguard legitimate shareholder and public interest. They are not attempts to manage by prescription, and Sir Stanley knows it. But then if you are paying yourself close on a million a year, you've got to find some way of diverting attention from it, haven't you?

### A long and difficult road ahead of BMW

Applying German accounting rules to the profit and loss account of any British company tends to have an unpleasant effect on the bottom line. But that alone is not enough to explain why BMW does not now expect a positive contribution from Rover until some time in the next millennium.

Indeed, one of the enduring mysteries of 1994 was why on earth BMW thought it worth paying British Aerospace £800m to take Rover off its hands. The market was hardly at a peak - unlike five years earlier when Ford paid the outrageous sum of £1.6bn to acquire Jaguar - and there was not exactly a queue of buyers lining up outside BAe's door. In truth, Rover was barely profitable and then only because of the performance of the Land Rover-Range Rover business which masked heavy losses in Rover's main car division.

At the time, however, Bernd Pieschetrieder, the BMW chairman, preferred to speak mistily of resurrecting the Riley and Wolsley marques while Rover executives confidently predicted that there would be no loss of identity on the grounds that "when you have a fine claret and a fine burgundy you do not mix them in the same glass".

Well, it has taken a little over two years for the party to end, the hangover to set in and BMW to reach for the Alfa Romeo. After leaving Rover largely to its own devices, the Germans are, like a rash, suddenly all over Longbridge and Cowley. It is easy to see why if you subscribe to the view of John Lawson at Salomon Brothers. He says Rover has some of the worst production economics of any European car maker, a range which is ageing more quickly than most of its counterparts and a model replacement programme which could soak up £3bn in the next six years and still leave

it trailing in the wake of even the much-maligned Renault.

While the analysis might be extreme, at least some of it must reflect the concerns being aired in Munich. Rover's production lines may be flexible. But to be making only 10 models yet using eight different platforms, when VW will be turning out seven times as many cars on half the number of platforms has to be the economics of the madhouse.

It has taken Ford seven years and some fearful accumulated losses to begin making headway at Jaguar. BMW looks to be at the start of an equally long and difficult road. Mr Lawson says it will depress its share price by 15 per cent for the foreseeable future. One thing is certain, the pain will be felt as much in the Midlands as Munich.

### Selling British Energy at any price

Another day, another minor humiliation for what looks, mercifully, like being the last big privatisation for the foreseeable future. Tucked away in the prospectus for the British Energy flotation is a fascinating little paragraph which just about sums up the lengths to which ministers were prepared to go to get this one away.

We will not bore you with the legalese, nor the casual brutality done to the English language in its drafting. Suffice it to say that this paragraph gave the international managers

syndicating the offer *carte blanche* to sell the shares to pretty much anyone they could find provided they were prepared to underwrite those bids and buy back the shares should they be sold within three months.

Now it is normal practice in privatisations for the Government and its advisers to ensure that the institutional book is of the highest quality. The last thing they want is investors of dubious pedigree shorting the offer or unloading stock in the immediate aftermath. Indeed the sanction usually handed around is to threaten to exclude any institution engaging in such behaviour from future privatisations.

In the case of British Energy, the Government and BZW were clearly concerned less about the provenance of the bidders and more about the colour of their money. Not that Cazenove or Capels would put fast money into the stock, you understand. But what about the other members of the syndicate? Sitting in Whitehall it is impossible to vet the credentials of every investor in southern Italy.

We are assured that the proportion of shares subject to this unusual underwriting arrangement was "not significant". But the arrangement still speaks volumes for the conduct of the sale as a whole. Perhaps it is just as well that the Treasury has nothing left in the cupboard to sell. Except of course the 12.3 per cent stake it is still left holding in British Energy even after doing everything it could think to offload the stock.

## Economy: Rise in average earnings sparks fears of renewed inflation

# Sharp fall in jobless rate signals pick-up in growth

CHRIS GODSMARK  
Business Correspondent

Unemployment fell by a much bigger margin than expected last month, providing a boost for the Government and another sign that underlying economic growth may be picking up.

But economists feared that upward revisions to average earnings figures were an indication of inflationary pressures in the pipeline, reducing the chances of further cuts in interest rates.

The seasonally adjusted jobless total dropped by 24,100 in

July to 2,126,200, its lowest level since March 1991. The consensus forecast by City economists had been for a drop of around 14,000. The Office of National Statistics also said June's fall in unemployment at 16,000 was larger than the previous estimate of 14,300.

The unemployment rate last month was 7.6 per cent, though the male rate, at 10.3 per cent, compared with a rate for women of just 4.3 per cent. Government statisticians said July's fall, the highest since March, was out of line with the recent trend, with reductions in the

coming months expected at around 15,000.

Figures for unfilled vacancies at job centres were also buoyant, rising by 11,500 to 230,300, the highest number since January 1989.

Kevin Darlington, UK economist at stockbrokers Hoare Govett, said: "Unemployment continues to trickle down faster than anticipated. These figures give the distinct sense that behind the scenes the economy is more buoyant than perhaps other statistics are suggesting."

John Monks, general secretary of the TUC, pointed to re-

cent survey evidence showing a fall in the number of people employed. "The fall in claimant unemployment is welcome, but is not a reliable guide to what is really happening in the labour market. There is still no sign that the economy is generating more jobs."

The number of people out of work and claiming benefit in July fell in every region, though there were signs that the gap between north and south was opening up again. The biggest reduction was in the South-east, where the rate stood at 7.1 per cent. The lowest unemployment rate was in East Anglia, at 5.8 per cent, while in the North the jobless total stood at 9.7 per cent.

There was less good news for the Government in the average earnings figures. The surprise fall reported in underlying average earnings growth in May, from 3.75 per cent to 3.5 per cent, had been revised back upwards in the statistics published yesterday. The new estimate for May was 3.75 per cent, with the same figure for June.

Economists differed over the significance of the revision. Claran Barr, from Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said: "Eddie is clearly saying that Ken Clarke will be taking a real chance if he tries to cut rates again. He will lose all credibility with the markets."

## George steps up opposition to cut

The Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, stepped up his opposition to further interest rate cuts when he met Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, last month, writes Chris Godsmark.

Minutes of the meeting, published yesterday, the first since June's quarter-point rate reduction, revealed that the Governor advised "strongly against any further interest rate cut on the basis of the present evidence".

He told Mr Clarke that since the base rate cut, to 5.75 per cent, there had been nothing in

the economic figures to alter the Bank's view that rates should have remained at their previous level of 6 per cent.

In reality, Mr George explained, the reduction might have made matters worse, by putting the Government's inflation target at risk.

He said: "Last month's cut in interest rates would, in itself, have increased the risk to the inflation target. To that extent it may have brought forward the time when interest rates will need to rise."

In response, Mr Clarke, with mastery understatement, ad-

mitted that he and the Governor were "still slightly apart on the decision to cut rates". But he claimed there had been no difference of opinion in last month's meeting about the need to maintain rates at their current level.

Economists interpreted the minutes as further evidence of a tougher approach by the Bank. Claran Barr from Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said: "Eddie is clearly saying that Ken Clarke will be taking a real chance if he tries to cut rates again. He will lose all credibility with the markets."

John Monks, general secretary of the TUC, pointed to re-



Walking man: The headquarters of Munich Re which has made a US acquisition. Photograph: AP Photo/Frank Augstein

TOM STEVENSON  
City Editor

## Munich Re in \$3bn bid for US insurer

Munich Re, the world's largest reinsurance group, said yesterday it planned to acquire the third-ranked US reinsurer American Re for \$3.3bn, boosting the German group's share of the lucrative US market.

The Munich-based insurance giant said its \$65-per-share offer had the backing of the US firm's directors and its 64 per cent owner, investment firm Kohlberg Kravis Roberts. The takeover should be complete by

the year-end, it added. US authorities and minority shareholders have yet to approve the deal which Munich Re said was hammered out "in a matter of weeks". The offer price represents an 11 per cent premium to American's price before the announcement. The move would triple Mu-

nich Re's reinsurance business in the US, the world's biggest insurance market. It comes amid growing demand for firms that offer reinsurance - the way insurers protect themselves from exposure to risk from policy claims. Analysts welcomed the acquisition as a long-term strate-

gic move but were concerned at the seemingly high price being paid.

"It's a pretty full price when earnings are approaching a cyclical peak. It also ignores any goodwill or amortisation," said Tom Bennett, analyst at Paribas Capital Markets.

Munich Re shares declined DM47.5 to DM13.535 on the news.

It said that its latest acquisition would increase premium income from reinsurance to DM22.5bn (£9.8bn) and overall income to DM37bn.

### IN BRIEF

- City Centre Restaurants, the Deep Pan Pizza to Garfunkels group, closed 6p lower at 117p after announcing profits for the six months to June only 2.4 per cent higher at £6.41m. Refurbishment costs knocked £870,000 off operating profits which were otherwise 13.5 per cent better than a year previously. James Naylor, chief executive, said that the second half year had started well.

- Conrad Ritblat, the property group which acquired Erdman Lewis in January, enjoyed a 47 per cent increase in fee income in the year to May. Profits rose 53 per cent to £2,077m before exceptional. John Ritblat, chairman, said: "We are now poised to take advantage of a marketplace which now looks healthier than it has for several years." Dividend rose 10 per cent to 6.325p.

- Independent Insurance, the property, marine and motor insurer, reported a 12 per cent rise in premium revenues from £207m to £232.7m in the six months to June. Chief executive Michael Bright said he was delighted by this performance in spite of continuing competition in the UK insurance market. Pre-tax profit-making investment gains rose 15 per cent to £16.7m while the dividend increased by the same margin to 5.3p (4.6p).

- Long Term Credit Bank of Japan has been fined \$1m by US federal and state regulators. It is believed to be one of the largest ever imposed in New York banking history, said the state bank- ing department, which said that it had discovered "numerous and pervasive internal control weaknesses and violations of banking law and regulations" relating to securities trading.

- The Bank of England welcomed a detailed report from the European Monetary Institute (EMI) on plans for a cross-border payment system for the single currency from 1999. The report describes the proposed Trans-European Automated Real-Time Gross Settlement Express Transfer system, otherwise known as TARGET. This "should assist banks to prepare for a single currency whether the UK is in or out," the Bank said.

- Hoechst pre-tax profits rose 103 per cent in the first half of 1996, mainly due to the sales of two subsidiaries. Hoechst reported a first-half pre-tax profit of DM2.1bn (£917m), which included DM1.8bn from the sale of its stakes in SGL Carbon, a carbon and graphite manufacturer and Uldes, a plant construction company. Sales fell 1 per cent, to DM26.1bn, which the company attributed mainly to the rise in the dollar against the mark.

- Novo Nordisk, the Danish drugs and biotechnology group, posted better than expected interim profits, boosted by solid sales increases and an improved product mix in core health care and enzyme operations. Net profit rose by 16 per cent to 873m crowns (£98.45m) while sales were 2 per cent higher at 7.05bn crowns.

- Lombard said that it may seek to revive the merger of its platinum interests with Impala Platinum if the European Commission reverses its veto of the deal on anti-competitive grounds. Impala has appealed against the decision, but Lombard has not yet joined the process. It says that talks with Brussels on European platinum sales should be conducted by the world's two largest platinum producers, Anglo American and Gencor, which owns a majority stake in Impala Platinum.

## Gehe set to renew bid for Lloyds Chemists

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Gehe, the German pharmaceutical wholesaler, yesterday gave the firmest indication yet that it was ready to renew its bid for Lloyds Chemists. The group and rival bidders UniChem were last month given qualified approval by the British competition authorities to go ahead with their offers, subject to the sale of most of Lloyds' wholesale depots.

Speaking in London yesterday, Karl-Gerhard Eick, Gehe's finance director, said: "We are trying to fulfil the remedies [demanded by the Department of Trade and Industry] in order to come up with the next bid. We hope this can happen faster than the deadline of 18 October. It is not only in our hands, but also those of the OFT."

Gehe must satisfy the Office of Fair Trading that it has reached heads of agreement to sell seven of Lloyds' 10 warehouses by the October deadline.

Mr Eick said a "fair number" of potential buyers had come forward, most of them existing drug wholesalers in the UK.

But he warned that both the requirement to sell the operations and Lloyds' recent profit warning would affect the value of the business. "It is strange if you have to sell a business and find buyers for a business you really don't know. We have not had time to do due diligence." The seven warehouses had a turnover of between £130m and £140m, on which a normal margin of around 2 per cent was expected, he said. That implies the businesses could be valued at anywhere from £20m to over £40m to Gehe, Mr Eick suggested, although he stressed that, given their poor recent performance, the operations would be sold for much less. Other sources have suggested they may fetch less than £5m.

Last month's warning by Lloyds that second-half profits

would be hit by uncertainty surrounding the bid "has to have an influence on the question of valuation", Mr Eick said, although he added that it was "not a logical consequence that that changes the bid price". Much would depend on the attitude of UniChem.

UniChem hinted strongly yesterday that it was ready to renew its bid at close to the original price. It said that, after two years of scrutiny, Lloyds' strategic value to the group remained the same. "We had always taken the view that we would have had to make disposals of wholesale depots and we factored this into our original thinking."

The group is thought to have had around 25 expressions of interest for the six warehouses it is being forced to sell by the DTI. Gehe revealed that AAHL, its British wholesale and retail operation with which Lloyds would be merged, had lifted operating profits by 48 per cent to £24.5m in the six months to June.

## Mortgage costs at 20-year low

Homes are now more affordable than at any time in almost twenty years, a report for the TSB bank claimed yesterday.

Buyers throughout Britain typically spend £25,400 every month on a mortgage out of every £100 they take home, according to the TSB's Affordability Index.

That figure is based on data for the second quarter of the year, and compares with £30.90 for the corresponding three-month period last year, representing a drop of 18 per cent. TSB, which believes homes

have not been so affordable since 1978, reckons the cost of servicing a mortgage will fall to its lowest level by Christmas when homeowners will spend an estimated £25.20 on their loans.

But a probable 1 per cent interest rate increase and gradually rising house prices could see that figure rise to £29.10 by the end of next year.

TSB's mortgage marketing manager Steve Lowe said: "This is excellent news for would-be homeowners planning to move in the next few months. And it could even act as a trigger for those

people considering a move in the near future."

John Stewart, an independent housing analyst who compiles the TSB Index, said: "The combination of April's tax cuts, lower mortgage rates and faster average earnings growth have helped improve affordability over the past few months. These factors have been more than enough to outweigh the negative impact of a slight increase in house prices."

"And we're likely to enjoy the benefits in terms of affordability until at least the end of the year."

## SBC hails 'excellent' Warburg first half

JOHN WILLCOCK

Swiss Bank Corporation claimed yesterday that the integration of British investment bank SG Warburg had been successfully completed, as the Swiss group unveiled first-half earnings up 34 per cent due to higher commission and trading income.

SBC refused to supply separate figures for Warburg, which it bought in the spring of last year. While integration of the securities operations has gone well, many of Warburg's leading corporate finance people have left, and some corporate clients have also defected.

"It's been difficult for some people to reconcile themselves to the fact that UK corporate advice and finance, while important, isn't so important if you look at SBC as a whole," said one source. Analysts say that SBC took an aggressive line to the integration.

SBC chief financial officer Peter Wuffli said Warburg's first-half performance was "excellent". He said that the British merchant bank had met the goals set at the time of the acquisition, although these were not specified yesterday.

The smallest of Switzerland's big three banks said net profit rose to SF722m (£388m), at the lower end of estimates, from SF540m last time.

Last week Union Bank of Switzerland - the country's biggest bank - posted a 33 per cent net profit increase for a period that analysts have called the most turbulent six months in Swiss banking history.

## Graduate

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18  
business

# BICC is still turning that corner

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN  
EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

The switch-back share price of BICC over the past five years reflects the number of times hopes have been dashed that the cables and construction group might at last have turned the corner. Optimism is now riding on prospects that Alan Jones of Westland, who arrived as chief executive last year, is at last sorting things out. The latest interim figures suggest the group's recovery has a long way to go, despite the enthusiasm of the market in pushing the shares 5p higher to 320p yesterday.

Profits before exceptional items edged up £3m to £63m in the six months to June, leaving underlying earnings per share fractionally higher at 6.6p (6.5p). The real disappointment lay in a further swathe of exceptional items and provisions after last year's whopping £127m write-off, which looked like a kitchen sink job at the time. BICC is taking a further £65m of exceptional charges, of which the German cables business accounts for £25m and most of the remainder relates to a belated act of realism about the development site in London's Spitalfields, cutting its value to just £30m.

To be fair, Mr Jones hinted strongly at the time of the full-year results in February that Germany would require further action in view of deteriorating market conditions in the wake of a price war there. Following the decision to get out of cable for the building industry, the knife is being taken to the retained high-voltage power cable operation. That should boost margins and there is welcome news that the market is showing signs of stabilising after the recent action to reduce capacity by the big players, which as well as BICC include Alcatel and Siemens.

There is scope for optimism that Mr Jones can deliver on his aim to raise return on capital in cables to 20 per cent. Action taken so far was predominantly responsible for lifting profits from BICC Cables, which groups operations in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, from £37m to £51m. Meanwhile, the consolidation and re-focusing of the North American business saw underlying profits rise from £6m to £8m, when stock gains and losses are ignored.

More of a question mark hangs over BICC's ability to revitalise Balfour Beatty in the forecast 18 months. Stripping out a maiden contribution of around £9m from three British Rail track maintenance operations acquired in April, there was a loss in the region of £8m in the half-year. Success in winning private finance initiative projects and management changes will not be sufficient in themselves to do the trick while markets remain so difficult.

## Glynwed rescued by acquisition

Thank goodness for Victaulic, the plastic pipes and fittings group that Glynwed acquired a year ago for £150m. Without its £8.3m contribution in the half-year to June, the Aga stove to metal processing group's interim figures would have looked even more disappointing.

Victaulic's profits limited the damage at the pre-tax profits line to a 3.1 per cent decline from £41.5m to £40.2m but there was a price to pay. Earnings per share, the more important measure of course, emerged 17 per cent lower at 10.99p (13.23p) as the profits were spread more thinly over an enlarged share register.

The problem with Glynwed is that despite its best efforts it remains wed-

ded to the UK and German economies and especially their consumer and construction industries. The Victaulic acquisition added a slug of less cyclical utility pipework but the group is more dependent than it might admit on a marked upturn in the general economy.

It is also a victim of, and unable to control, the volatile metals price cycle. The price of stainless steel last month dipped below the previous low for the metal stock in January 1994. Aluminium has also been on a downward trend for more than a year. That led to a 6 per cent reduction in turnover from the division and a halving in profits to £6.1m.

That took the shine off Pipe Systems, which benefited from the inclusion of Victaulic to see sales rise 84 per cent to £182.5m and profits up a handy 49 per cent to £15.8m. It is now second only in profit terms to the metal processing arm, which chipped in a broadly unchanged £17.1m as the mix of business changed to higher-margin steel work.

The last of Glynwed's four divisions (down from six as part of an ongoing attempt to refocus the group into growth areas) was a curate's egg. While

consumer items such as cookers and sinks grew strongly, the demand for drainage systems, covers and gratings, especially in Germany, was weak.

Full year forecasts emerged from yesterday's quite heavy downgrades at about £83m this year and £96m next. The recovery will come eventually, but in the meantime a prospective price/earnings multiple of 14, at 332p, falling to 12 is high enough.

## MAID is worth waiting for

MAID has always been the ultimate jam tomorrow stock, investing heavily for a pay-off later. Now, just as the supplier of on-line information and research looks to be fulfilling its promise, there is talk of takeover. Potential predators include Reuters and Reed-Elsevier, though any takeover would need to be agreed by founder Dan Wagner and the other directors, who control around 40 per cent of the shares between them.

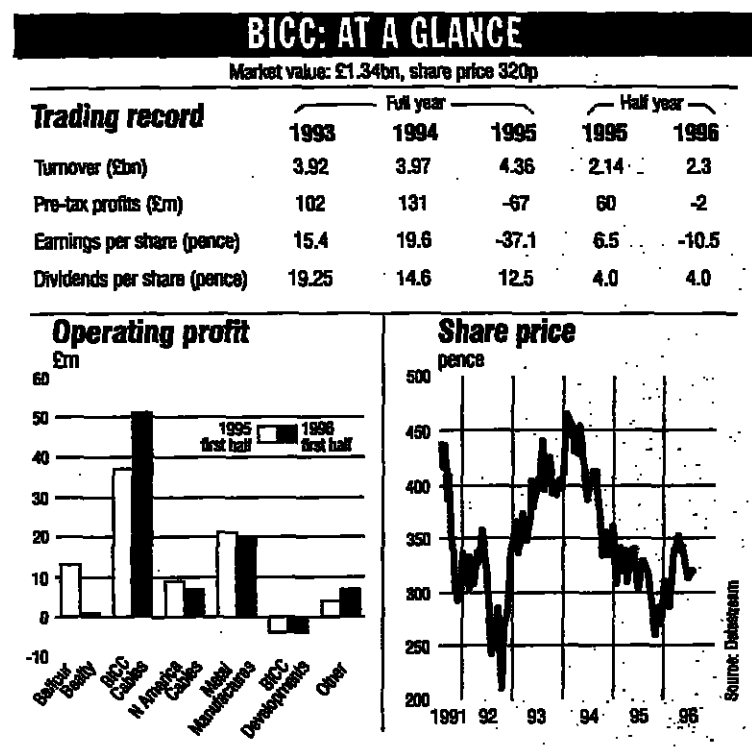
MAID has a highly regarded product but is a relatively small player in a market being scrapped over by giants. Rivals include Reuters, Dow Jones, Reed Elsevier's Lexis-Nexis and Knight Ridder's Dialog, to name a few. These companies have deep pockets but their systems lack some of the refinements of MAID's higher-price service which supplies business information such as newspaper cuttings and market research to its subscribers. MAID has a head start, the challenge is to make that count.

The crock of gold is the huge US market, which is where MAID is investing heavily. It was largely expansion across the Atlantic that caused it to slip to a pre-tax loss of £1.9m in the second quarter compared to profits of £197,000 in the same period last year.

MAID now has 11 US offices, of which seven have opened this year. Some 1,200 new corporate subscribers were signed up in the second half, of which two-thirds came on stream in the second quarter, more than forecast.

MAID has already signed partnerships with manufacturers like IBM and service providers such as CompuServe. Other deals are likely with cable and telephone companies or even manufacturers of hand-held computers such as Psion. Internet growth will also help.

Losses of £5m are predicted this year before bouncing back to profits of £1.5m the year after. The shares finished 3p higher at 271p yesterday, capping a good, if volatile, run since flotation at the beginning of 1994. If you can stand the ups and downs, hold on.



# Swiss banking culture affects Warburg's results

CITY DIARY  
JOHN WILLCOCK



Hans de Gier: Results at SBC Warburg have been downgraded

I received a startling phone call from SBC Warburg's press office in London yesterday. "Just to say that SBC Warburg's results are out, but there won't be any separate breakdown of Warburg's activities, either in the figures or on the phone."

Um, right. It seems like only yesterday when SG Warburg's old annual report would slam on to the desk, a good half an inch thick. Before it was taken over by Marcel Ospel and his Swiss gnomes, Warburg's results were illustrated by countless graphs and pages of script. No longer. Warburg merited just three lines in SBC's half-year results announcement.

It is as if the whole history of financial reporting by investment banks is going into reverse, with less and less being revealed. Perhaps next year SBC's executive chairman in the UK, Hans de Gier, will be denying it owns a British bank at all.

Everyone knows what a mess the British phone system has got into over the spiralling number of phone numbers required. One suggestion has been to give everyone their own portable number which they can take with them whenever they move.

The British Chambers of Commerce, no less, expected to be able to do just this when it moved its headquarters recently just 400 yards down Victoria Street in London to new offices.

BT said no; the BCC would have to get new numbers. It had been in Westminster.

Granada recently unveiled proposals for a series of new television programmes, including one on cooking. Not to be outdone, Carlton then trumpeted its own cooking programmes to be hosted by well-known telly chefs. Granada has hit back, saying: "It's a useful thing to own Forte, which employs Nico de Chez Nico fame and Marco Pierre White."

Analysts take notice. Obviously there were synergies between Granada and Forte, after all. Hang on. Granada also owns Little Chef and Happy Eater. "And now, a new series on fried breakfasts..."

ster, now it was in Pimlico, a different phone district.

In vain did the BCC protest that Pimlico is itself in Westminster. Now that's how to keep customers happy.

A colleague has just received an exciting brochure inviting him to "the global business event of the century," a seminar featuring Tom "Peter Principle" Peters, Dr Stephen "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" Covey and Peter "Fifth Discipline" Senge, three of the biggest selling business authors ever.

This sounds great, thought my colleague. An opportunity to meet these prophets face to face and discuss ideas with them. Until he read the small print: "A world-wide interactive satellite seminar..."

At the back of the four-page brochure it transpires that in order to enjoy this event, beamed to 40 nations and 30,000 people, you will have to attend the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham. The three gurus will be beamed by satellite from Lexington, Kentucky. To discuss "how to make your team UNSTOPPABLE!"

Prices start at £233.83 per person. I think I'll borrow the books from the library.

Peter Jarvis, group chief executive of Whitbread, must be pleased as punch. His Mackeson Stout has just won gold medals at the World Beer Championships.

So forget Atlanta. The 200-year-old recipe, brewed in Sarnesbury, Lancashire, has succeeded where so many athletes failed, and has just been launched in the US.

In contrast to the mighty Guinness, Mackeson tastes quite sweet, which Mike Morris, Whitbread's export director, thinks is an advantage: "Sweet drinks are popular in a number of diverse countries and Mackeson provides a very full flavour which is enjoyed around the world." Make mine a pint.

**GRAND PRIX '96 RACE SCHEDULE**  
Belgian GP  
August 25  
Italian GP  
September 8  
Portuguese GP  
September 22  
Japanese GP  
October 13

**Overall Top 50 Dream Teams**

- Fifty teams are in joint 1st position with 518 points
- 1 Jumpin' Jacks
  - 1 Billie Racing
  - 1 Maddisons
  - 1 Crisp One
  - 1 The Pits
  - 1 Pippa's Pole
  - 1 Positioners
  - 1 AJ A Carte
  - 1 The Forty One's
  - 1 GRI
  - 1 Elfuletha
  - 1 KBS Team
  - 1 Lightning
  - 1 Geecezar!
  - 1 Equinox
  - 1 Sherbie's Stars
  - 1 Farahs
  - 1 Sky Clad
  - 1 Gordy's GTB
  - 1 Mino's Marauders
  - 1 Herb's Flyers
  - 1 Dan's Reckless Racers
  - 1 Tony's Omega One
  - 1 Robin I
  - 1 The Pilkington Formula 1
  - 1 Catch Me Out
  - 1 Sincley Formula 1
  - 1 French Flyers
  - 1 Peanjuree
  - 1 Panville
  - 1 The Dare Devils
  - 1 Dream Machines
  - 1 They Think It's All Over F1
  - 1 Kwest International
  - 1 Wright Off
  - 1 Harvey
  - 1 God's Son
  - 1 Bisland's Bangers
  - 1 I'm Alright Jacques
  - 1 Reliant
  - 1 Southern Sharks 3
  - 1 The Tiger Hobbes Team
  - 1 Bino One
  - 1 They Who Dare
  - 1 Charlie's Choice
  - 1 DSC
  - 1 Petrol Heads
  - 1 Ward's Wonders
  - 1 Bourbon
  - 1 Red Rose Racing
  - 1 Formula Fantastic
  - 1 Tamar Racing

# FORMULA 1 DREAM TEAM

## The latest scores and results

So Damon Hill was denied maximum points again because of yet another dodgy start, while his Williams team-mate, Jacques Villeneuve, recorded his third victory of the season.

While it was a good weekend for those patriotic Dream Team managers who have backed the constructors' champions Williams-Renault, British drivers fared less well. David Coulthard parked his McLaren early following an engine seizure after Martin Brundle was the first to retire when he ran wide on lap six, and Johnny Herbert saw his promising weekend come to an end when his Sauber's Ford V10 engine gave out.

Northern Ireland's Eddie Irvine found the difficulties at Ferrari continue when the old gearbox failure problem returned to haunt him. His team-mate, the defending champion Michael Schumacher, also failed to get in the points yet again when he ground to a halt on the 71st lap. The Prancing Horse stable promised much at the start of the season, and any Dream Team managers relying on them for chassis or engine points will be looking enviously at their colleagues who stuck with the tried and tested options of Williams and Benetton.

Another podium finish for one of last season's Ferrari drivers, Jean Alesi, will have pleased his supporters, while Mika Hakkinen, Olivier Panis and Rubens Barrichello also picked up valuable points.



Jacques Villeneuve (far right) celebrates his victory in Hungary

## DRIVER OF THE DAY: JACQUES VILLENEUVE

Despite losing 10 seconds on his final stop while in the lead, Jacques Villeneuve managed to exit the pits still ahead of his Williams team-mate, Damon Hill, pipping him to the chequered flag by less than a second.

It is sometimes hard to remember that this is the 25-year-old Canadian's first year in Formula One, and despite his lack of familiarity with the Hungarian race, he drove a measured and impressive race. With no team orders at Williams this season, Hill must surely feel Villeneuve's hot breath on his neck as only 17 points separate the two, with 40 still on offer.



## WIN a drive in a grand prix car

The Dream Team manager with the highest number of points at the end of the Grand Prix Championship season will win our top prize - a drive in a 650bhp F1 car.

You will be flown to the AGS team's training school in the south of France for the most exhilarating experience of your life. The school specialises in F1 courses and provides all the necessary and instruction you will need for a day driving F1 and other single seat cars.

**INDIVIDUAL GRAND PRIX PRIZES STILL TO BE WON**  
You can enter our Formula 1 Dream Team game at any time during the grand prix season. Even if you don't win our top prize, don't worry, there are still prizes to be won with each grand prix race. Enter for the Belgian Grand Prix and you could win a trip to the Italian Grand Prix. Get The Independent on Wednesday 21 or Thursday 22 August for details on how to register.

**HUNGARIAN GRAND PRIX PRIZE WINNER**  
Congratulations to Jo Smith from London and her team Another Nail Biting Finish. She has won exclusive membership to Team McLaren.

## Grand Prix Shopping List

DRIVERS	POINTS	CHASSIS	POINTS
1 M Schumacher	16	40 Benetton	16
2 J Alesi	16	41 Williams	20
3 D Hill	26	42 Ferrari	0
4 G Berger	1	43 McLaren	13
5 D Coulthard	-1	44 Sauber	0
6 E Irvine	3	45 Jordan	9
7 J Villeneuve	31	46 Ligier	0
8 M Hakkinen	18	47 Tyrrell	0
9 H H Frenzen	0	48 Arrows	-2
10 M Brundle	-3	49 Minardi	0
11 R Barrichello	18	50 Forti	-12
12 J Herbert	0		
13 M Salo	-5		
14 P Larri	0		
15 P Diniz	-4		
16 U Katajama	7		
17 J Verstappen	-2		
18 O Panis	18		
19 L Badoer	0		
20 R Rosset	10		
21 A Montemini	0		
22 G Fisichella	0		
23 V Sospiri	0		
24 T Marques	0		
25 F Lagorce	0		
26 N Noda	0		
27 T Inoue	0		
28 M Blundell	0		
29 J-C Boufflon	0		
30 K Brack	0		
31 K Bart	0		
32 E Collard	0		
33 N Fontana	0		
34 D Franchitti	0		
35 N Larri	0		
36 J Magnussen	0		
37 A Prost	0		
38 G Tarquini	0		
39 K Wendlinger	0		







# Clarke's recovery has all the signs of old-fashioned boom

Economists have a strong herd instinct, and none more so than economic forecasters. Their desire to stay close to their fellows far outweighs their memory of the recent past.

It is easy to spot this tendency by looking down the list of forecasts published each month by the Treasury. The consensus prediction for 1997 is a 3.2 per cent increase in GDP. Only three out of 44 growth forecasts lie more than 0.5 percentage points away from 3.2 per cent in either direction and only eight are more than 0.3 points away.

Yet there is an increasingly strong case that the UK economy is heading for something that looks a lot more like a good old-fashioned boom than a steady, sustainable recovery - and not even a mini-boom but a maxi-boom. The two brave souls who have predictions of 4 per cent growth and above in 1997 - Tim Congdon at Lombard Street Research and Paul Turnbull at Merrill Lynch - are looking increasingly prescient. Unlike most of the others, they have remembered the rule that the economy is never as well behaved as the forecasts.

For proof that booms always come as a surprise, there is no need to look any further back than 1994. In January of that year the consensus forecast was that the economy would expand by 2.5 per cent, driven by consumer spending and investment. All agreed it would be a better year than 1993. As it turned out, growth was actually 4.1 per cent. The granddaddy of recent booms



ECONOMIC VIEW  
DIANE COYLE

took place in 1988, of course. The Treasury had one of the highest growth forecasts for the year, at 3 per cent. The actual outcome was a 5 per cent leap in GDP. (The fact that the Treasury team had done better than most other economists did little to preserve it from criticism of its forecasting record, just as the fact that the Bank of England's record on forecasting inflation has been slightly better than average is currently not deflecting the myth that it is unduly pessimistic.)

## It is a fair bet a chunk of the windfall cash will show up in consumer spending

Economist David Mackie at City investment bank JP Morgan has compared the 1990s to the 1960s, the Barber boom in the 1970s and the Lawson boom in the 1980s.

The parallels - hinted at by the charts - make quite a compelling case for suspecting that the Clarke boom is in the making. The common threads are loose monetary and fiscal policy, increasing demand for exports and financial liberalisation.

Take macro-economic policy first. Base rates fell 3 percentage points from their peak in 1992-93, 2.5 points in 1971-72, 2 points in 1985-86.

This time around they have fallen only 1 point from their peak in the preceding 12-18 months.

On the other hand, the Government's tax and spending policy is far more relaxed. The budget deficit ranged between 1.6 and 5.8 per cent of GDP during the Barber boom, and 1.1 and 2.8 per cent under Mr Lawson, as he then was, Mr Clarke's

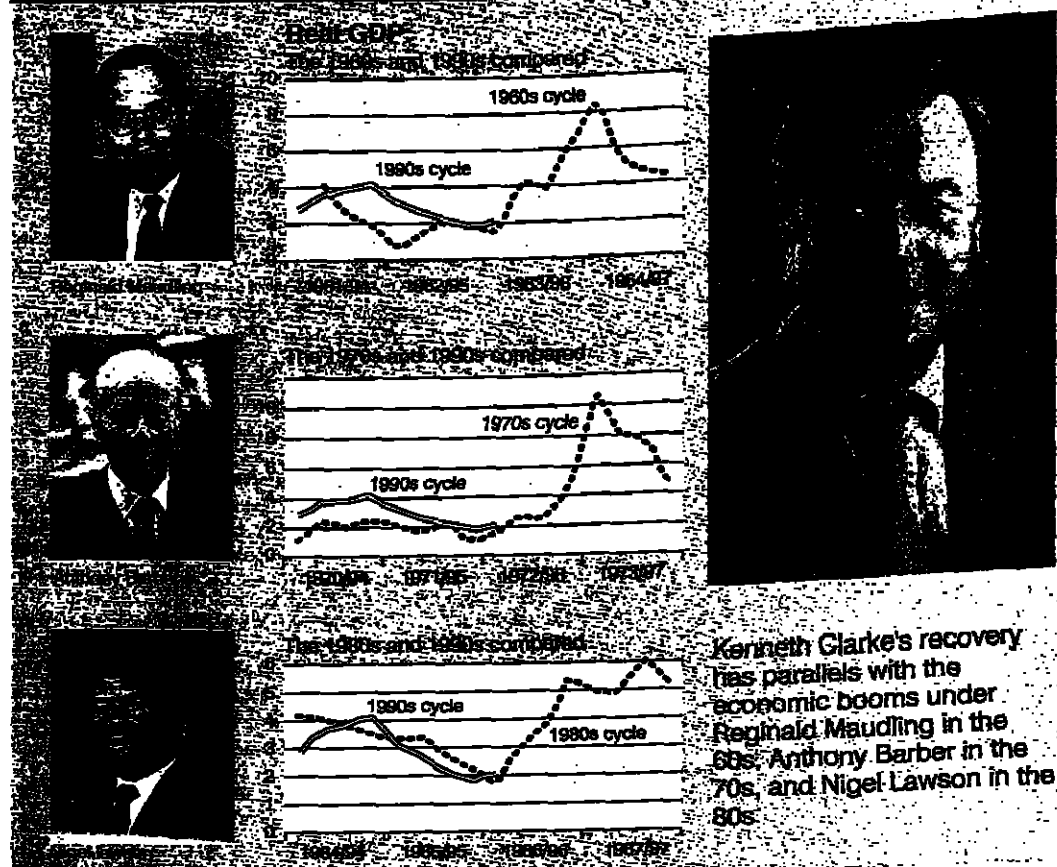
significantly along with the slow-down in key markets such as Germany. But most forecasters expect them to pick up next year. The consensus has export growth rising from 4.5 per cent this year to 5.6 per cent next.

On the face of it there is little comparison with the financial deregulation that took place during the earlier episodes. Hire purchase restrictions were lifted in the early Sixties, boosting sales of consumer durables. This was when many households got their televisions and vacuum cleaners. The next decade brought the end of direct controls on bank lending. In the 1980s indirect controls on lending and direct foreign exchange controls were ended, and building societies' lending became less restricted.

However, there is an equivalent move now with the conversion of many of the building societies into banks. Not only will they have more freedom over their loans policy, it is putting £16bn (at Mr Mackie's latest estimate) directly into the hands of consumers. This will take the form of shares but will be easily saleable. If only half of it is spent, it will add nearly 2 per cent to consumer spending.

Some commentators have argued that the money - along with maturing Treasury and local government debt - will not be spent because people treat wealth windfalls differently from income windfalls. There is something in this, but many also regard spending money on consumer durables as different

## SHADES OF TORY CHANCELLORS PAST



Kenneth Clarke's recovery has parallels with the economic booms under Reginald Maudling in the 60s, Anthony Barber in the 70s, and Nigel Lawson in the 80s.

from spending on food or clothes. It is a fair bet a chunk of the windfall money will show up in consumer spending, used to buy dishwashers, computers and new cars.

With all the conditions in place, the evidence of an impending boom is building up.

Retail and consumer expenditure have started to accelerate, helped along by this year's tax cuts, the biggest one-off boost to spending power since the late 1980s.

Only a few idealists believe there will be no further income tax cuts in November's Budget. Low mortgage rates have set house prices rising at an annualised rate of 10 per cent on average across the country and far more in parts of London and the South-east. Unemployment continues its trend decline and businesses have started to report skill shortages. Even Britain's former manufacturing sector is edging towards a recovery.

It will not be long before all the classic signs of economic froth such as gambling, mini-skirts and new electronic accessories make a re-appearance. Of course, the world might be different this time around. We might be set for the "Clarke steady recovery" rather than the "Clarke boom". But to count on it would be to forget British economic history - as most of the economic forecasters seem to be doing.

## Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
US Dollar	1.5505	1.54	1.53	1.52	1.51
Canada	1.2106	1.21	1.20	1.19	1.18
Germany	2.2300	2.23	2.22	2.21	2.20
France	7.2611	7.26	7.25	7.24	7.23
Italy	205.40	205.40	205.40	205.40	205.40
Japan	167.85	167.85	167.85	167.85	167.85
ECU	1.2233	1.22	1.21	1.20	1.19
Belgium	47.389	47.389	47.389	47.389	47.389
Netherlands	8.9896	8.9896	8.9896	8.9896	8.9896
Denmark	25.969	25.969	25.969	25.969	25.969
Sweden	10.6639	10.6639	10.6639	10.6639	10.6639
Norway	8.9493	8.9493	8.9493	8.9493	8.9493
Spain	166.320	166.320	166.320	166.320	166.320
Switzerland	1.2297	1.2297	1.2297	1.2297	1.2297
Australia	1.9876	1.9876	1.9876	1.9876	1.9876
Hong Kong	1.0395	1.0395	1.0395	1.0395	1.0395
New Zealand	1.6181	1.6181	1.6181	1.6181	1.6181
Saudi Arabia	2.2897	2.2897	2.2897	2.2897	2.2897
Singapore	2.2893	2.2893	2.2893	2.2893	2.2893

## Other Spot Rates

Country	Spot	Dollar
Argentina	15400	0.0087
Australia	1.9876	0.5108
Brazil	15705	0.0028
Canada	1.2106	0.7100
Chile	527.90	0.0019
Colombia	2054.00	0.0005
Czech	166.320	0.0060
Denmark	25.969	0.0391
Finland	8.9896	0.1336
France	7.2611	0.1365
Germany	2.2300	0.4536
Greece	340.750	0.0029
India	56.769	0.0174
Indonesia	1540.00	0.0007
Israel	1.5505	0.2536
Italy	205.400	0.0049
Japan	167.850	0.0060
Korea	167.850	0.0060
Malaysia	1.5505	0.3400
Mexico	15.400	0.0649
Netherlands	8.9896	0.1125
Norway	8.9493	0.1250
Poland	154.000	0.0065
Portugal	205.400	0.0049
Romania	154.000	0.0065
Russia	154.000	0.0065
South Africa	154.000	0.0065
Spain	166.320	0.0074
Sweden	25.969	0.3536
Switzerland	1.2297	0.7100
Taiwan	154.000	0.0065
Thailand	154.000	0.0065
UK	1.0000	1.0000
USA	1.0000	1.0000
West Germany	2.2300	0.4536
Yugoslavia	154.000	0.0065

Forward rates quoted high to low are at a discount; subtract from spot rate; rates quoted low to high are at a premium; add to spot rate.

\*Dollar rates quoted as reciprocals.

For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0201 323 3053.

Cable cost 30p per minute (cheap rate) 40p other times.

## Interest Rates

UK		Germany	
Base	5.75%	Discount	2.50%
France		Lombard	4.50%
Intervention	5.55%	Canada	
Italy		Prime	7.00%
Discount	8.25%	Discount	5.00%
Netherlands		Denmark	
Advances	2.80%	Discount	3.25%

Bond Yields				
Country	8yr	yield %	10yr	yield %
UK	7 1/8	7.24	7 1/4	7.12
US	8 1/8	8.33	8 3/8	8.67
Japan	5 1/8	5.25	5 1/8	5.25
Australia	8 7/8	7.54	10 1/8	10.29
Germany	5 3/8	5.26	8 1/8	8.29
France	5 7/8	5.45	7 5/8	6.34

Yields calculated on 100% basis

Money Market Rates	
Over/night	7 Day







## sport

**COUNTDOWN TO THE NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:** Trevor Francis is back at the place where his illustrious career started, aiming to put Birmingham City back among the élite. Phil Shaw talked to him and, below, considers the prospects for each division



Trevor Francis has moved quickly to bring stability to Birmingham by signing senior professionals Photograph: Adam Scott

## 'Boy Wonder' craves a return to realism

There are three people with whom Trevor Francis will inevitably be compared in his new incarnation as manager of Birmingham City. One is his predecessor, Barry Fry. Another is Brian Little, his counterpart at neighbouring Aston Villa. The third? Trevor Francis.

Birmingham supporters over 30 go misty-eyed at the memory of the 16-year-old Francis, locks flapping on his shoulders, dispatching his fourth goal past the Bolton keeper. The "Boy Wonder" went on to amass 133 and represent England before leaving for Nottingham Forest. His brilliance burned ever more brightly in Blues folklore during the ensuing dark decade.

After an odyssey that also took him to Manchester, Genoa, Glasgow and beyond, Francis has finally come home. The hair is thinner and greying, butting a man approaching 43, and he hangs up his boots after playing at the highest level until his 40th year. For many of the faithful, however, the appointment heralded a return to the days when he ran fast and free.

St Andrew's, which he recalls heaving with 52,000 people, is largely unrecognisable from the grim, graffiti-spattered fortress he left in 1979. The Small Heath skyline is now dominated by a stadium resembling a scaled-down Old Trafford in blue and white.

To perform in this shrine of the times, Francis, the game's original £1m man, recently lavished Birmingham's first seven-figure sum on Chelsea's Paul Furlong. Bankrolling the long-overdue rebirth of the Blues is David Sullivan, the Essex-based entrepreneur who bought the ailing club three and a half years ago.

Throw in the arrival of Steve Bruce, Barry Horne, Gary Ablett and Mike Newell and it adds up to a feverish sense of anticipation as Birmingham prepare for their opening First Division fixture, at home to Crystal Palace on Sunday. But is it reasonable to expect Francis to recreate the impact he made as a player?

"No, it isn't," he said, plain-speaking as planes roared over the training ground like a full house at the Maracana. "What I would say is that when I was last here I helped the club up from the then Second Division. That's my aim again now."

There were invitations, in the pre-Sullivan era, to come back as player-manager. Francis preferred not to risk being remembered as "a has-been". Yet after a year out of the game, during which he proved himself a perceptive analyst with Sky, the opportunity he wanted came in May when Fry was hoist by his own PR.

The previous incumbent had a fetish for mid-price forwards. Many of those who passed through the revolving door shared his Barnet background. Francis prefers Premiership pedigree. He intends to prune, but said: "I'm all for using squads - you have to nowadays - but certainly you need a bit more stability."

His first plunge landed the defender who led Manchester United to three championships. "When you sign Steve Bruce you don't just get a footballer but the

best captain in the country. How can you put a price on his leadership qualities? It also helped to get other players in."

For all the owner's fan-like impatience, Francis plays down suggestions that he has two years to deliver promotion. "No target's been set," he said. "We're like Wolves in that there's great expectancy, but let's be realistic. We came 15th last season so there's a lot of work needed to make the top three."

It is safe, though, to assume that consolidation is not on the agenda. The assessment of personnel, tactics and formations by Francis and his assistant, Mick Mills, has been condensed even by pre-season standards. "One thing you've never got in management is time - you're always fighting it."

The pressure on him has been intensified, if only in the media's eyes, by Little's success at Villa. They once faced each other in a Youth Cup derby that drew 40,000 to two games. Today, talk of friendly rivalry draws a wry smile from Francis.

"It used to be Barry Fry and Ron Atkinson in the city," he mused. "Now you've got complete opposites in Brian and myself, quiet, private people. He's a friend and he's done an unbelievable job. But we can be as big as them. Villa will always have the tradition, and they've got more support outside the city."

"Within Birmingham we're at least their equals. When the club were almost finished a few

years ago, the potential never changed. The crowds were there if the product was right."

As Blues lurched between the middle divisions, Francis was cutting his managerial teeth in controversial fashion. At Queen's Park Rangers, he fined Martin Allen for attending the birth of his first child rather than play in a match.

"I was accused of being too tough. The week before I was supposed to be too soft. I just did my own thing and tried not to pay too much attention to what people said. A big problem is that people don't know me because I'm a private person. So they start inventing and assuming things."

"I look back on the Martin Allen episode as very unfortunate. Whatever I do in my managerial career, people will always bring that up. In the interests of balance, it should be stressed that Francis' record at Sheffield Wednesday bodes better for Birmingham: third place in the top flight, two Wembley finals and two seventh places before a slump and the parting of ways."

One wag at a Fans' Forum asked how he would react if Sullivan's managing director, Karen Brady, went into labour. Would her husband, Paul Peachisolido, be excused? Francis saw the joke, but intriguingly the Canadian striker was soon sold.

Cynics saw his exit as Francis laying down the boundaries over which Brady, with whom he enjoys "an excellent relationship", must not stray. Likewise his insistence on reversing the closure of Birmingham's youth scheme, and the restoration of basic press facilities. But the real power struggle, starting this weekend, is for a place in the Premiership.

## Kinkladze and Sinclair hold keys to promotion

The megabucks may be in the Premiership but the presence of Georgi Kinkladze, Trevor Sinclair, Terry Venables and Steve Bruce means the First Division is hardly bereft of bankable names. To counterbalance a lack of quality in depth, it also promises the fiercest competition in all four sections.

Going into the final third of last season a handful of points separated the sides in play-off contention from those fighting relegation. If standards are even, however, resources are not, although those with no benefactor can take heart from the

promotion of Derby and Sunderland, canny spenders both.

Leicester's instant return to the land of milk and money, allied to Crystal Palace's near miss, also indicates that clubs dropping from the Premiership retain a critical edge. Manchester City and Queen's Park Rangers have (so far) resisted overtures from Kinkladze and Sinclair. If they stay - which will depend on a positive start - both should be near the summit.

Bolton's prospects look less bright, especially since Sasa Curcic has now signed for Aston Villa. Their followers, like

City's, will have noted Bruce Ritchie's availability with interest.

Buying experience for the short-term objective of getting up is a blueprint established by Leeds and Blackburn, who duly dispensed with the likes of Vinie Jones and David Speedie once up. Birmingham may not expect more than a season or two from Steve Bruce, but he should be hugely influential. Alan Shearer's best foil, Mike Newell, could be a snip at £775,000 alongside the £1.5m Paul Furlong.

Wolves' woes last winter prove that it is not simply a matter of throwing money at the market. Mark McGhee's honeymoon with a restless support will be over if his surprisingly low-key close-season recruits - Keith Curle and Iwan Roberts to partner Dean Richards and Steve Bull in the spine of the team - do not produce results.

Sheffield United's revival provided pleasing confirmation of Howard Kendall's rehabilitation and of boardroom ambition. Nigel Spackman, and

the Belarus striker Peter Kachuro are the major additions to a squad already equipped for the higher reaches.

As for Dave Bassett's new charges, Palace, "all" they have to do is recapture the consistency he instilled during their spring surge. Much depends on finding someone good enough to fill Nigel Maryn's gloves - the Simon Tracey deal flourished yesterday - and on Ray Houghton's enduring relish for the fray.

Next, with Mike Walker restored, should be thresholds if not quite there. Spencer Prie's defection to Leicester will not be

seen as a continuation of Robert Chase's selling policy if it means looking on to Darren Eadie. The scenario at Portsmouth has echoes of the hostility to Chase and Venables may yet be tempted elsewhere if fresh capital is not forthcoming.

Charlton and Huddersfield, having lost Lee Bowyer and Andy Booth, may have to settle for respectability. West Bromwich and Swindon could be better dark horses. Albion followed the cult capture of Richard Snodgrass by freeing the purse strings for Alan Buckley, while Steve McMahon is too

ruthless to rest on the laurels of Swindon's Second Division title. Neighbouring Reading and Oxford may toll, along with Oldham, Southend and the Potteries clubs. Port Vale's FA Cup exploits were a fine advertisement for flair on a shoestring, but John Rudge can not defy straitened circumstances indefinitely. Lou Macari deserved an award for taking Stoke to fourth place after minimal outlay. Key players have gone, and Mike Sheron and Larus Sigurdsson could follow to ease debts, so a repeat would be a real leaves-and-fishes job.



Steve Bruce is hoping to help Birmingham go up

## Heath's mentor becomes rival

During a brief, unproductive stint as an Aston Villa player, Adrian Heath came to admire Graham Taylor's man-management style and thoroughness. The respect survived Taylor's travels with England, and circumstances have now conspired to make them rivals for promotion.

As Burnley's player-manager, the 35-year-old Heath is balancing a desire to be his own man with lessons absorbed from the likes of Howard Kendall and Taylor. The latter, who took up his first such appointment nearly 24 years ago, is back at Watford as general manager, striving at 51 to recreate the rise which once made them runners-up behind Liverpool.

Each took up his post in the middle of a relegation tussle this year. Heath won his, Burnley gaining some impressive results against the promotion pack.

Taylor, after taking Watford's apparently forlorn fight to the final fixture, ran out of time. Heath has since brought over a Portuguese Under-21 striker, Bambo. A fee of £65,000 saw Damien Matthew swap Crystal Palace for Turf Moor, though the master stroke may have been to persuade Vince Overson and Nigel Gleghorn to move free from Stoke.

Taylor, abetted by Kenny Jackett, has added Wimbledon's Steve Tibboys and the Sunderland keeper Alec Chamberlain. Perhaps more significantly, Watford repelled Wolves' interest in David Connolly, the teenager whose two hat-tricks last spring led to Republic of Ireland caps. A good start and Elton John might even fund a few transfers

amid the tantrums and tiaras.

Millwall also look ready to revive after relegation. Jimmy Nicholl has dispensed with his Russian misfits and spent £1.5m in the market he knows best. Steve Crawford, his chief striker at Raith, won a Scotland cap last year, while Nicholl once described the defender Dave Sinclair as "so hard he has tattoos on his teeth".

Barry Fry has suffered demotion too, though his knowledge of the lower divisions should be more useful to Peterborough than it was to Birmingham. The coup in acquiring Martin O'Connor from Walsall showed that Fry sees the need for quality as well as quantity.

Crews' Dario Gradi is Fry's transfer antithesis. The home-grown potential of Gareth Whalley, Mark Rivers, Francis Tierney and Danny Murphy may have to

be fulfilled elsewhere, however, unless he finds a happy medium between being required watching and sustaining a challenge.

Of the promoted clubs, Preston have the momentum and money to pick up where they left off. Plymouth should flourish under Neil Warnock; and the meanness defence in history ought to sustain Gillingham. Alan Smith's Wycombe could be useful long shots, but Blackpool may need longer to recover from being promoted and sacked Sam Allardyce in favour of the unproven Gary Megson.

The Bristol clubs are again in transition, with Rovers moving to the city's rugby union club under Ian Holloway's player-manager. Mere survival would nevertheless be a disappointment. For Luton, Bury, Shrewsbury, Rotherham and York, it may be the best they can hope for.

## Wigan given hope by Whelan

Wigan and Wembley have been virtually twinned during the Nineties, with all the luvvies and cash going to the Lancashire town's rugby league giants. If Dave Whelan has his way, which he usually does, this will be the season Wigan Athletic fight back.

Cheered on by a budding businessman called Jack Walker, Whelan played for Blackburn in the 1960 FA Cup final - but the team lost and he broke his leg that day. He later resurfaced in Wigan, supporting the 13-a-side code and building up a chain of sports shops.

Happily for the round-ball minority, the multi-millionaire's interest in football was rekindled. Whelan bought the ailing Latics and, like some apprentice Uncle Jack, gave notice of his ambitions by signing three Spaniards a year ago. Roberto Martinez, Isidro

Diaz and Jesus Seba - "Los tres Amigos" - coped well with the culture shock of cold nights at Hartlepool and Mansfield. Not well enough, though, to keep Graham Barrow in the manager's job, his autumn replacement by John Deehan revealing the owner's restlessness for progress.

Wigan missed the play-off by two points, but look equipped to make sure this time. Deehan recruited Kevin Sharp, an England youth contemporary of Butt, Campbell and Fowler, for £80,000 from Leeds. This summer he has added Doncaster striker Graeme Jones (£150,000) and Barnsley midfielder Charlie Bishop (£40,000).

Carlisle, whose title 15 months ago underlined the importance of financial muscle, may be

Wigan's chief rivals. Relegation was embarrassing after Michael Knighton's boasts of "Europe in 10 years", but Mervyn Day has added imaginatively (French defender Stephane Pomeau) to a squad tried and trusted at this level.

The picture of potential Northern domination is completed by Darlington. To lose one away game was extraordinary; not to go up even more so. The attempt to improve at home will be undertaken without Watson recruited Kevin Sharp, an England youth contemporary of Butt, Campbell and Fowler, for £80,000 from Leeds. This summer he has added Doncaster striker Graeme Jones (£150,000) and Barnsley midfielder Charlie Bishop (£40,000).

Carlisle, whose title 15 months ago underlined the importance of financial muscle, may be

Despite a tight budget, relegated Swansea show signs of responding to the ideals Jan Molby brought from Liverpool. Northampton, for whom 11th place represented genuine progress, may draw big crowds to Sixfields if they improve further, while Colchester, Chester and Scunthorpe should also be in contention.

Torquay's most important pre-season fixture was in court, where Stevenage failed to oust the bottom club. A colourful chairman, Mike Bateson, has a new management team - including best-selling author Garry Nelson - and has waged £7,000 on their landing the title.

Hard-up Hull could be Conference-bound, with the similarly strapped Scarborough or potentially homeless Brighton also candidates to replace Torquay as the League's last resort.

## Paul on his way to Bath

Rugby Union  
DAVID LLEWELLYN

Bath are expected to announce today that they have signed Henry Paul from Wigan rugby league club on a short winter contract. The New Zealander is a centre who not only scores tries but kicks goals. He therefore presents a threat to England's centre Jeremy Guscott, since the Bath captain, Phil de Glanville, is hardly likely to be left out.

Paul, 22, is reported to have agreed a deal with Bath worth around £100,000 for four months, the contract running from 11 September to 11 January, which coincides neatly with the proposed European Cup competition. Having committed themselves to paying something approaching £6,000 per week Bath will want their money's worth, it is highly unlikely that

Paul would be put on a rota. He could always turn out at full-back, but there is Jon Calland to consider. It would mean that Paul would miss out on the Pilkington Cup and the latter stages of the Courage League programme.

But there could be a hitch. Paul, together with Va'iga Tuigamala and Gary Connolly is challenging a move by the Rugby Football League to bar their short-term moves into union. Tuigamala and Connolly are set for Wasps and Harlequins respectively, but the League's chief executive, Maurice Lindsay, has told clubs that they must seek the governing body's permission before agreeing to cross-code transfers.

However, according to Wigan, the contract has been signed. The reason for the short-term nature of the deal is because Wigan are scheduled to go on a tour of New Zealand in late January.

There is also every likelihood that Bath will announce the signing of a scrum-half. Having missed out on Kyran Bracken, of Saracens, and Cardiff's Robert Howley, they are thought to be interested in Argentina's Augustin Pichot, named yesterday in the Barbarians team to play Wales in Cardiff next weekend. Olivier Roumat will become the first Frenchman to captain the Barbarians against an international team.

Mike Brewer, the former New Zealand captain, will assist coaching Ireland this season. Brewer, a member of the side beaten by South Africa in last year's World Cup final, joined the Dublin-based club Blackrock College at the end of last season. He is expected to help out this weekend at a five-day squad session in Limerick.

Barbarians team, Digest, Page 23

## Spinners bowl over Pakistan top order

Cricket

The Leicestershire spinners Matthew Brimmon and Adrian Pierson took seven wickets between them as Pakistan were bowled out for 221 in the Telford Bitter Challenge match at Grace Road yesterday.

It would have been worse for Pakistan but for a ninth-wicket stand of 79 between Mustaq Ahmed and Ata-Ur-Rehman. Mustaq finished as top scorer with 38 and Ata hit a breezy 30 before being last man out. Brimmon claimed 4 for 39 in 21 overs and Pierson took 3 for 44 off his 20 overs. By the close, Leicestershire had replied with 28 for 1, with Iain Sutherland bowled by the last ball of the day, from Mohammad Akram.

Only three of the six sides in contention at the top of the County Championship are in action today. Derbyshire, who face rivals Nottinghamshire at Derby, will be without all-rounder Colin Wells, who has a back injury, and the pace bowler Andrew Harris (side-muscle strain).

Kent will again be without their England all-rounder Mark Ealham for the visit of Somerset. Ealham is still suffering from the strained rib muscle which forced him out of the reckoning for the second Test at Headingley. Trevor Ward will continue as captain.

The 23-year-old Richard Kettleborough is to replace the departed Australian Michael Bevan in the Yorkshire side for the match at Bristol, against Gloucestershire.

## Ledingham leads charge

Equestrianism  
GENEVIEVE MURPHY

Captain John Ledingham aims to win the Silk Cut Derby for the third time in succession (and the fourth overall) when he rides Kilbaha in this annual classic at Hickstead on Sunday. The contest carries a record British prize of £40,000, and is the climax of the four-day meeting that starts this morning.

Ledingham had intended to ride Kilbaha as part of the Irish Olympic team in Atlanta, but the gelding had a fever on the day that the horses were to fly to the United States, and he had to be left behind. Having missed the Games, the 13-year-old should strip a fresh horse for Hickstead.

Three riders have won the Hickstead Derby on four occa-

sions: Harvey Smith (whose famous V-sign was made after his 1971 triumph), Ireland's Eddie Macken (who gained four wins in a row on the great Boomarang) and Michael Whitaker (who had three in succession on Monsanta).

Whitaker will be the only one of the trio in possible contention for a record fifth victory. He rides two stallions, Elton and James Kernan's Touchdown, and is waiting to see how they go. Elton was placed in three classes in Dublin last week, but Whitaker has not yet competed with Touchdown. He brought the stallion back from recovering from a broken arm.

Nick Skelton, whose three consecutive Silk Cut Derby victories were initiated in 1987, is likely to be the home favourite. Skelton has missed the last two

derbies because he was without a suitable mount for the Hickstead course, but he believes that the mare Cathleen should be a worthy ride.

"Some horses take to Hickstead, and Cathleen is one of them," Skelton said. "She's very brave and scopey, she can jump big fences with ease and nothing spooks her." The mare proved that in winning the King George V Gold Cup on the Sussex course last month, so she earned the chance to tackle the ultimate Hickstead challenge.

John Whitaker will be at Valkenswaard in the Netherlands, looking for even richer pickings, while the Hickstead meeting is in progress. Having won the Pulsar Grand Prix in Monterey last year, he will earn a £390,000 bonus if he wins the same contest at the Dutch venue.

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of her victory in the British Open. She finished second in 1981, second in her first three tournaments in the United States and has consolidated her form in recent weeks. "It is all beyond my wildest dreams," she said. "Originally my goal was to keep my card." Webb has been so successful she has bought a house and a car in Orlando, Florida. Yesterday she rode for a spin down the MI in a more exotic form of transport, a white-knuckled passenger in a driver's Ferrari.

years and is now a United States citizen, has never played such a big golf event before. Though he has been playing on the North American Mini-Tour since retiring from tennis two years ago. Known as "Old Smokey" on the tennis courts because he rarely showed emotion, whatever the score, Lund, 39, says: "You must not make much out of my game. I'm an even golfer and I enjoy competitive golf. I have a few traditions but I am not Nick Faldo. I practise occasionally at the Audubon Golf Academy in Florida, and I have met Nick Faldo and tried to learn by watching him practise."

The winner of eight Grand Slam tennis tournaments is now a professional but became one



in unusual fashion. "I signed a new contract with Mizuno," he stipulated that when I needed golf, I had to play with Mizuno. I said, "I'm not a professional but I did not enter to me one way or another."

"Now I play in quite a few charity events, as well as some professional tournaments, along with other sports stars like Pete Dinklage and Michael Jordan," Lendl was asked to play in the first tournament by Chemung, the sponsors, in February took three months to accept. He said he did so "with a very heavy heart." He played the two rounds with two Engineers, Andrew Collison from Lynn and John Bickerton from Worcester. "My big golfing ambition is to be able to play a round without shooting for a ball," said Lendl, shot 69, two under par, and

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